



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The Board of Management has decided that school policy and practice in this area shall be strictly in line with the DES Guidelines published in the document “Child Protection – Guidelines and Procedures” (April 2001) and ‘Children First’ Plan.

In our Policy Child Abuse is as determined by the ‘Children First’ Guidelines. We note that the main areas are

- Neglect
- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse

Our policy should be referenced to the ‘Children First’ Guidelines for detailed explanations of the terms used.

The descriptions here should not be determined as exhaustive:

- Neglect
- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse

Queries about Child Protection Procedures may be directed to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

Allegations of Child Abuse should be communicated in a prompt manner to the

- **Designated Liaison Person**
- **Chairperson of the Board of Management**
- **HSE or Garda Authorities.**

Issues Involved

- Confidentiality
- Protection of Person Reporting (cf also Act 1998)
- Qualified Privilege
- FOI Act (1997) as it applies.

All staff shall be made aware of the Policy

- The school staff shall be especially aware of issues such as neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse.
- It shall be noted that a staff member may note to the Principal from time to time some disturbing issue relating to a child and the principal may initially decide to:
- Ask HSCL coordinator to visit family only after consulting with the principal
- Ask to meet parents.
- These would be issues such as: Poor uniform, lack of school requisites, lack of fundamental clothing, concern over lunches, and collection of pupils.

Roles & Responsibilities

The Board:

The board acknowledges its responsibility in the following manner:

- Primary Responsibility for the care and welfare of pupils
- Development of a clear and effective policy
- Appointing DLP and a deputy DLP
- Review and Evaluate the policy
- Provide and support staff training
- Note the progress of 'children at risk'
- To support investigations by HSE and Gardai of allegations
- Support staff in the use of curricular programmes
- Set up procedures to allow teachers attend meetings associated with pupils. To support this with advice.

The School Community

- All staff has a duty of care for all children.
- All staff must adhere to the school's policy & procedures
- Teaching Staff must deliver the curricular areas
- All staff should be aware of the usual signs of abuse
 - Changes in behaviour
 - Marks or bruises
 - Etc.

Designated Liaison Person

1. The DLP has specific responsibility for child protection
2. The DLP is the FIRST point of contact for anyone who has a suspicion or an allegation.
3. The DLP has the responsibility to deal with outside agencies on suspicions

and allegations.

4. The DLP must inform the Chairperson in the event of a report being sent to the HSE or Gardai.

Deputy Designated Liaison Person

The Deputy is responsible for performing the duties in the absence of the DLP.

The deputy is also the contact person when the allegation is made against the DLP.

The School DLP is

Patrick Hanley

The School deputy DLP is

Mary Kennedy

➤ Aims of Our Policy

- Create a safe, trusting, responsive and caring environment
- Provide personal safety skills education which includes abuse prevention for all children in the school
- Develop awareness and responsibility in the areas of child protection amongst the whole school community.
- Put in place procedures for good practice to protect all children and staff.
- Ensure that all staff are aware and familiar with 'Children First' and the DES guidelines and procedures in relation to reporting concerns and/or disclosures of child abuse
- Provide for ongoing training

It is important to remember that the immediate health and safety and general welfare of the pupil and the use of 'common sense' under the terms of 'in loco parentis' should be the first line of action.

General Conduct

1. The physical punishment of children is not permissible.
2. Verbal abuse, sexual innuendo, telling of jokes of sexual nature in the presence

of pupils is never acceptable. Great care should be taken when it is necessary to have a discussion with a pupil on a sexual matter.

3. Being alone with a pupil is not a good practice. When such meetings are set up it is advisable to keep a record of it, ensure a staff member is nearby and that the door be kept open to the other staff member.
4. All pupils must be treated evenly.
5. All types of bullying behaviour verbal, psychological or physical should be dealt with in line with school policies.
6. Alcohol, tobacco or drugs should never be given to pupils. However medication with appropriate approval in writing is permitted to be administered by the relevant person designated for same.

Respect for Physical Integrity

- The physical integrity of pupils must be respected at all times.
- Staff should not engage in inappropriate contact though this should not prevent appropriate contact when it is required e.g. injury or the pupil is distressed.

Respect for Privacy

- A pupil has a right to privacy and this should be upheld at all times.
- This is especially true when pupils are in locations such as swimming pools, toilets, changing rooms etc.
- If a pupil needs to change clothing we believe all pupils in our school can do so themselves then they should be directed to a room on their own.
- No photographs for any purpose may be taken of pupils in sensitive areas such as swimming pool etc.

Meetings with Pupils

- If an individual meeting with a pupil is necessary care should be taken as to its location and if possible another person should be nearby. The doorway to the next area should, if possible, also be kept open.
- Such meetings should be short and to the point.
- As a general rule parents should be informed at the earliest opportunity of such meetings and their purpose except if the meeting would put the child at risk.
- In our school we do not visit the homes of the pupils to meet with pupils.
- If a child has to be brought home due to illness then the best and safest practices should be employed: hopefully another adult can accompany the driver, use of taxi, bringing two other pupils and/or confirming by phone to the parent the length of time it will take.

Pupils with Special Needs/Disability

- Due to the sometimes additional cares these pupils require additional importance is given to the management of contact with them.
- If there is a need for a school employee to engage in supporting the pupil in tasks of a personal nature then the parents must have been informed at the commencement of his time in school.
- Discretion and sensitivity must be used by the employee.
- Only tasks which the pupil cannot perform himself should be supported by the employee.
- In an emergency situation parents need to be informed of the actions taken as soon as possible.

Vulnerable Pupils

- Sensitivity to the needs of such pupils must be shown at all times.
- The risk of bullying to these children must be fully appreciated by all staff members.
- It is important that vulnerable pupils be listened to especially as they may have difficulty expressing their concerns and there should be no under estimation of their reports.

Disclosures from Pupils

- All staff must act with sensitivity in these matters and should
 - Listen to the pupil
 - Not ask leading questions or investigate the matter
 - Offer re assurance to the pupil but not make promises regarding who else may be told
 - Allow pupil to recall events
 - Not over react
 - Explain that further help may be sought
 - Record the conversation and retain for record
 - Report the matter to the DLP or Deputy DLP as fitting or to the chairperson if the DLP and deputy are implicated.

Record Keeping

- Keeping accurate written records of these matters is important.
- Such records should note
 - What has been observed
 - Who observed it
 - Details of any physical injury
 - Any comment by the person or others using exact words
 - The DLP will maintain the records in the records room and mark them as confidential.

Vetting

- The BOM undertakes to vet all new employees (short and long term)
- The vetting process is the Garda Vetting process as operated by the CPSMA
- References shall be checked.

Induction

- All new employees shall be given a copy of this policy.
- The DLP is responsible for providing all new staff, in any category, with a copy of the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures DES 2001 Children First Guidelines 1999.
- Providing new staff with a copy of this policy.
- All new teachers are expected to teach the full SPHE policy.

Supervision

- A range of supervision strategies are in place in the school. Every effort is made to ensure these are in place and known to parents.
- Pre School time (8:45am – 9am) before this time supervision is not guaranteed.

- Break time periods (as arranged by the roster)
- Post School: (10 minutes) as pupils walk out every effort will be made to have 1 person accompany the pupils out.
- Security person has been employed at the gate for morning and afternoon periods.
- Special 'wet days' and 'wet mornings' plan is in place and roistered, though this does not mean full time supervision in each class for all the periods.
- SCP staff support supervision.
- Parents have been informed by Newsletter of regulations regarding contact with any pupil in the school.

One to One Teaching

- While sometimes recommended it is not generally acceptable to have students work with one teacher on their own or one staff member on his/her own.
- Exceptions include SNA and Psychologist etc when 'time out' is required.

Attendance

- Scoil Iosagain has an attendance policy.

SPHE Programme

- The SPHE programme has been determined by reference to the DES curriculum and by reference to the RSE policy committee.
- The school will use the 'Stay Safe' policy on occasion and other programmes as the teacher decides.
- 6th Class pupils will have an opportunity to work through the DVD which is supporting their maturity.

Images

- Images of pupils for school publications, Junior Achievement documents, school website etc will require parental approval and the names of the pupils should not accompany the photograph.
- Events organised by the school are sometimes photographed or videotaped by parents, friends and sometimes on behalf of the school. All pupils taking part shall be afforded the opportunity to withdraw or the school may decide not to permit the photography.
- Any concern should be brought to the attention of the DLP.

Technology

- The AUP policy of the school covers this area.

- Pupils are permitted to have mobile phones in school but these must be turned off during school hours.

School Visitors

- All visitors are requested to report to the school reception.
- Parents/guardians who wish to remove pupils must receive a coloured permission slip signed and dated to give to the teacher.

Travel

- As detailed elsewhere every effort will be made not to have one pupil with a staff member in a car journey. Best practice is that at least 2 will be present for all journeys.
- As detailed earlier where best practice is not possible parents shall be informed by phone of the exact situation and likely time.

School Trips

- Our school engages in many short term trips to libraries, art galleries, religious events etc in school and at least 2 adults should always be present.
- School tours shall be organised and again staffing should be at the appropriate level.
- No overnight stays are permitted by the school.
- Written consent is required for all trips though the filling in of the application form has a section to cover most such trips.
- School tours etc shall be known to parents.
- Where other agencies take responsibility for the pupils on an occasion it must be clear that the best practices and guidelines are in place there. The class teacher has the final determination on this matter.

Reporting Cases of Suspected Child Abuse

The person to whom the report has been made will immediately contact the DLP.

The DLP, if satisfied there are reasonable grounds, will report the matter to the HSE immediately.

Reasonable grounds are:

- Specific information from the child that he has been abused.
- An account from a witness who saw the child being abused.
- Evidence such as injury or behaviour change which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in any other way.
- Where there is injury or behaviour consistent with both abuse and an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it is a case of abuse e.g. pattern of injuries, implausible explanation, dysfunctional behaviour etc.
- Consistent evidence that a child is being abused in any of the formats outlined earlier in the document.

A suspicion, which is not supported by any objective indication of abuse or neglect, would not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern in the first instance.

- 1. The DLP will make every effort to contact the HSE duty social worker but in any event will put it in writing.**
- 2. In an emergency the Gardai will be informed.**
- 3. The Chairperson will be informed.**
- 4. The DLP will decide initially himself/herself whether to tell the parents but will be further advised by the social worker.**

Advice

Sometimes the DLP, on behalf other school will seek the advice of the HSE but it is clear that the DLP is not making a report. The HSE advice will then be followed. If it is to report then that is the paper trail, if not to report that advice will be sought in writing.

Conferences on Children.

As far as possible the DLP will attend child conferences called by a statutory body. This attendance and the report (written or verbal) will be known to the chairperson of the BOM.

The chairperson may request from the agency clarification as to the need of the employee to attend and the type of report to be made. The chairperson will also determine from the agency who else will be present.

Allegations / Suspicions of Child Abuse by School Employees

- The primary concern of the BOM of Scoil Iosagain is to protect pupils attending the school. As an employer the BOM also has responsibilities towards its employees. In this respect and in the event of an allegation of child abuse being made against employee the BOM will observe the employee's right not to be judged in advance of a full enquiry.
- The BOM will seek legal advice immediately.
- The BOM will inform the school insurers immediately.

Reporting Procedures

- Staff members who receive an allegation of abuse against another employee will report the matter to the DLP. (or as outlined earlier the deputy DLP or the chairperson)
- Staff members who form a suspicion about another employee shall discuss the matter with the DLP. (or as outlined earlier the deputy DLP or the chairperson)
- Where an allegation of abuse is being made the DLP will act immediately in line with this policy and seek a written statement of allegation from the person making the allegation or the parents of the child if the child is making the allegation.
- The DLP will inform the chairperson of the BOM
- Where the allegation is made against the DLP then the chairperson will assume responsibility for reporting the matter to the HSE or gardai

Action to be taken by Chairperson

Where the chairperson has become aware of an allegation of abuse against a school employee the chairperson will privately

- Inform the staff member that the report has been made
- The nature of the allegation
- Whether the allegation has been reported to BOM /HSE/Gardai by DLP

The employee will be given a copy of the written allegation and any other relevant documentation. The employee will be given time to respond, in writing, to the allegation to the BOM within a specified time. The employee must be made aware that the response will also be given to the HSE.

The Board in accordance with its duty of care to pupils ensure that no child is put at unnecessary risk. In this respect the chairperson of the BOM will as a matter of urgency take any necessary protective measures. These measures will be proportionate to the level of risk and will not unreasonably penalise the employee,

financially or otherwise, unless necessary to protect the children.

If, in the chairperson's opinion, the nature of the allegation warrants immediate action the chairperson, on behalf of the board, will direct the employee to absent himself/herself from the school with immediate effect.

If in doubt the chair will receive direction from the HSE or Gardai.

This leave will be noted as administrative leave and not suspension. This leave does not imply guilt in any form. The DES will be informed to receive formal approval for the paid leave of absence and for the employment of a substitute.

The chairperson will convene an immediate meeting of the full board to inform the board of the allegations, advice given and actions taken to date.

Allegations regarding employee pertaining to previous employment or outside school hours.

Where an allegations of abuse relate to a past employment and where these are being investigated by the HSE / Gardai the chairperson will maintain regular and close liaison with those authorities and a decision on the position of the employee will be taken with due regard to the advice of these agencies. If administrative leave is required to be taken the DES will be informed in the usual manner.

Where the alleged abuse has taken place in Scoil Iosagain or relates to the abuse of pupils of the school by school employee outside of school time, the BOM will convene a meeting. At this meeting the board will consider in detail the allegations which have been made against the employee and the source of these allegations. They will consider the advice of the HSE / Gardai in relation to the allegation and the written response of the employee.

At the meeting

- The person who is alleging abuse by the employee will be offered an opportunity to present his/her case to the board and may be accompanied by another person
- The parents may represent the child
- The employee will also be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation to the board and may be accompanied by another person.

Having followed the procedures outlined above, and having satisfied itself that it has sufficient information to hand in order to make a determination in relation to the allegation the board will make a decision on the action, if any, it considers necessary to take in respect of the employee.

The DES will be informed if the employee has to be absent from school on

administrative leave.

Confidentiality

All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse will only be shared on a need to know basis in the interests of the child.

Giving information to those who need to have that information for the protection of the child who may have been or has been abused is not a breach of confidentiality.

Any DLP who is submitting a report to the HSE or Gardai will inform the parent / guardian unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or place the child further at risk. This decision will be recorded and will be based on advice from the agencies.

The BOM will deal with all cases in the fullest confidentiality.

This policy is supported by other policies in the school such as:

- Code of Discipline
- SPHE Programme
- Health & Safety Plans

The policy will be updated based on advice from key agencies and also on the advice of the POR for SPHE.

Other points

Standard Form for Reporting Child Protection / Welfare Concerns will be available in the school office.



EDUCARE DRUG AWARENESS PROGRAM

All opportunities shall be used to educate students about the dangers of misuse of substances including drugs.

Specific Elements of the school policy:

- 4th class students to receive the Educare Drug Awareness program designed by this school.
- 5th /6th Classes to use “ Drugsense” Computer program
- Outside agencies to be used to educate on issues relating to drug culture
- No acceptance of drugs including cigarettes in the school.
- Promotion of healthy lifestyles and Sport in the school

Students to be taught that all things that enter their bodies must either be used by the body, rejected and expelled or stored in one of the vital organs. This is then risky and when we put unnecessary substances into our bodies then we put it at risk eg smoke / substances such as sprays, drugs etc. We teach them that there are specially trained personnel (doctors and sometimes parents) who can prescribe substances for our bodies.