

# Child Protection Policy



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## Scoil Ghobnatan 2022

### Introductory Statement

The staff of the school drafted the following policy on their school development planning day in June 2006.

A review of the policy took place in March 2022 and the following staff members were present: Donal O'Shea, Eleanor Walsh and members of the Board of Management.

### Rationale

The BOM of Scoil Ghobnatan has adopted the Department of Education and Science Guidelines and Procedures for schools in relation to Child Protection and Welfare. This policy is an outline of how Scoil Ghobnatan proposes to implement these guidelines in order to ensure the protection and welfare of all pupils attending our school.

### Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

Scoil Ghobnatan seeks to help the children to grow and develop into healthy, confident, mature adults, capable of realizing their full potential as human beings. We strive to create a happy, safe environment for the children where they feel secure, knowing that if they have concerns, they will be listened to with understanding and respect and their concerns will be acted on.

### Aims

1. To raise awareness of child abuse namely, emotional, physical, sexual abuse and neglect, among all members of our school community including Board of Management, teachers, pupils, parents, SNAs, secretaries and caretaker.
2. To put in place clear procedures for all school personnel dealing with suspicions and allegations of child abuse.
3. To identify other policy areas which need to be amended in light of the "Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017".
4. To identify curricular content and resources that contribute to the prevention of child abuse and to enable children to properly deal with abuse if it occurs.

### Guidelines

**The Guidelines are laid out as follows:**

1. Appointment of a Designated Liaison Person (DLP)
2. Roles, Responsibilities and Guidelines
  - 2.1 Role of the Board of Management
  - 2.2 Role of the Staff Members (Teachers, SNAs, Caretaker, Secretaries)
  - 2.3 Role of the Designated Liaison Person
3. Child Protection Meetings/Case Conferences

4. Organisational Implications
5. Curriculum Implications

### **1.0 Appointment of a Designated Liaison Person (DLP)**

1.1 The Board of Management has appointed Donal O'Shea as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) in Scoil Ghobnatan to have specific responsibility for child protection.

1.2 Eleanor Walsh has been appointed as Deputy DLP to take the place of the DLP if he is unavailable.

1.3 The position of DLP will be addressed at the first meeting of each new Board of Management. The DLP will continue to act as such until such time as he is replaced by the BOM.

### **2.0 Roles and Responsibilities**

- The BOM has primary responsibility for the care and welfare of their pupils.
- The DLP has specific responsibility for the child protection in the school.
- All staff have a general duty of care to ensure that arrangements are in place to protect children from harm.

#### **2.1 Role of the Board of Management**

- a. To arrange for the planning, development and implementation of an effective Child Protection Programme.
- b. To monitor and evaluate its effectiveness.
- c. To provide appropriate staff development and training

#### **Specifically they will**

- a. Appoint a DLP and a deputy DLP.
- b. Have clear procedures for the dealing with allegations or suspicions of child abuse (See Below)
- c. Monitor the progress of children at risk.
- d. Ensure that curricular provision is in place for the prevention of child abuse.
- e. Investigate and respond to allegations of child abuse against one of the school's employees which have been reported to the Health Service Executive (HSE) or Gardai.
- f. To decide on teachers attendance at child protection meetings/case conferences and to advise teachers with regard to same.
- g. To ensure that Garda Vetting clearance is acquired by all new staff members (mandatory) and by any other adults who are in regular contact with the children e.g. sports/games instructions, drama/music teachers etc.

### **Incidental Visitors to the school**

All personnel providing tuition to pupils will be Garda vetted e.g. Dancing, Athletics, Sport.

Tutors supporting in-class initiatives will only work under the supervision of school staff.

Members of the Parent Support Group will be Garda vetted.

### **Procedures for BOM in cases of allegations or suspicions of child abuse by a school employee:**

## **A.Reporting**

In the event of receiving a complaint or suspicion regarding an employee:

- i. The DLP will immediately inform the chairperson.
- ii. S/he will seek a written statement of the allegation from the person/agency making the allegation. Parents/Guardians may make a statement on behalf of the child.
- iii. The DLP will seek advice from the relevant HSE services and will take responsibility for reporting, based on this advice.
- iv. If the DLP, following consultation with the HSE, decides that this matter is not for reporting, s/he must inform the Chairperson. They must then inform, in writing, the person or agency making the allegation, of the reasons for this decision. If this person or agency still has concerns, they are free to consult with or report to the relevant HSE or Gardai on an individual basis. The provisions of the Protection for Persons reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 apply, once they report reasonably and in good faith.
- v. If the DLP, following consultation with the HSE, decides that this matter is for reporting s/he should inform the Chairperson, who should then proceed in accordance with the procedures in the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools”. (2017 pages 59-62)
- vi. The DLP/Deputy DLP completes a standard reporting form as comprehensively as is possible.
- vii. When the Chairperson becomes aware of an allegation of abuse, s/he will always seek legal advice and base his/her response on this advice.
- viii. S/he will privately inform the employee of the fact and nature of the allegation and if it is to be reported, whether or not it has been reported by the DLP to the HSE. (Refer to 7.4, p.59 of Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017). The chairperson has a duty to afford the employee fairness and due process - s/he is entitled to details and a copy of the written allegation, to advice and representation and an opportunity to respond to the BOM within a week.

## **B.Responding**

- i. When the Chairperson becomes aware of an allegation of abuse s/he will always seek legal advice and base his/her response on this advice.
- ii. The Chairperson will consider whether there is any risk to pupils' safety. If the Chairperson considers that there is a risk –s/he may require the employee to take immediate administrative leave. If unsure the Chairperson will consult with the HSE/Gardai.
- iii. If administrative leave has been invoked, the Chairperson will inform the DES. The HSE (in some cases the Gardai) may also be notified in accordance with legal advice received.
- iv. Once it is deemed necessary by the DLP and the Chairperson to make a report (after receiving advice from the HSE) the Chairperson will convene and inform a meeting of the BOM as soon as possible.
- v. Where the alleged abuse has taken place within the school, or relates to the abuse of pupils of the school, by school employees outside of school time, the BOM will investigate the matter. They will convene a further meeting, once the relevant information has been gathered. At this meeting the BOM will consider in detail
  - the allegations made and their source,
  - the advice given by relevant authorities
  - and the written responses of the employee.
- vi. At this meeting also
  - The person/agency who is alleging abuse by the school employee should be offered an opportunity to present his/her case to the BOM and may be accompanied by another person.
  - Parents/Guardians may act on behalf of a child.
  - The employee should also be afforded an opportunity to present his/her case and may also be accompanied.
- vii. The BOM must deal with the matter sensitively and the employee must be fairly treated.
  - viii. The BOM will make a decision on action, if any, based on their investigation and will inform the employee of this in writing. They will also inform the DES of the outcome, if the employee has been absent on administrative leave.
  - ix. Where it is not possible for the BOM to conduct an enquiry into allegations (e.g. where abuse has occurred in past employment, or where the employee is undergoing

investigation by relevant authorities, the Chairperson will maintain close contact with the HSE and receive reports and records from them where appropriate.

## **2.2 Role of the Staff Member (to include Teachers, SNAs, Caretaker, Secretaries etc.)**

a. **It is the responsibility of all teachers and staff members to familiarise themselves with the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 especially**

- Chapter 2 Definition & Recognition of Child Abuse
- Chapter 5 Reporting of Concerns
- Chapter 3 (3.2) Recognition of possible Signs of Abuse

b. **Guidelines for Teachers and Staff Members**

1. **Disclosures from children** (Chapter 3 (3.3))

- a. Where a child discloses alleged abuse to a staff member, the person receiving the information should listen carefully and supportively. Great care must be taken not to abuse the child's trust. This should not be a formal interview.

The following advice is offered:

- **React calmly**
- **Listen carefully and attentively**
- **Take the child seriously**
- **Reassure the child that they have taken the right action in talking to you**
- **Do not promise to keep anything secret**
- **Ask questions for clarification only. Do not ask leading questions.**
- **Check back with the child that what you have heard is correct and understood**
- **Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser**
- **Ensure that the child understands the procedures that will follow**
- **Make a written record of the conversation as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible**
- **Treat the information confidentially, subject to the requirements of the Children First National Guidance 2017 and relevant legislation**

- b. The staff member should obtain only necessary relevant facts. It is not the responsibility of school personnel to investigate allegations of abuse.

- c. The DLP should then be informed and given relevant records.

- d. If the suspected abuser is the DLP then the suspicion and any records will be passed on to the Chairperson who will proceed as per guidelines.

## **2. Suspicions of Abuse:**

- a. Staff members who suspect abuse should refer to Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 especially

Chapter 2 Definition & Recognition of Child Abuse

- b. Staff members should observe and record over time the dates/signs/symptoms/behaviour causing them concern.
- c. They should inform the DLP and pass on all records.

## **2. Role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP)**

- a. The DLP acts as a liaison with outside agencies, HSE, Gardai and other parties with child protection concerns.
- b. The DLP will inform all school personnel of the availability of the Children Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 in the school.. S/he will email and circulate to all staff Chapters 2 & 5 & Chapter 3 (3.2) 1 of these guidelines and advise on good practice.
- c. The DLP will be available to staff for consultation regarding suspicions or disclosures of abuse. S/he will keep records of these consultations.
- d. The DLP will: seek advice from the HSE.
- e. The DLP will report suspicions and allegations of child abuse to the HSE or / and a Garda Síochána based on this advice.
- f. The DLP will maintain proper records in a secure, confidential manner and in a secure location.
- g. The DLP will keep up to date on current developments regarding child protection.

### **Guidelines for the DLP in handling reported concerns and disclosures**

- a. Where the DLP/Deputy DLP have concerns about a child, but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, they should seek appropriate advice. To do this the DLP/Deputy DLP should make informal contact with the assigned (on duty) Social Worker. The DLP/Deputy in this case, should be explicit that she is requesting advice and not making a report. If advised to report the matter, the DLP will act on that advice.
- b. A report will then be made to the HSE by the DLP/Deputy, in person, by telephone or in writing. In the event of an emergency or non-availability of HSE staff, the report should be made to the Gardai. The DLP should also report the matter to the Chairperson of the BOM, who should then follow the procedures as outlined in Chapter 5 of Children Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.
- c. A standard reporting form is completed by the DLP/Deputy as comprehensively as possible. Tusla Report form ([www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie))
- d. Parents/Guardians will normally be informed that a report is being made. It may be decided that informing the parent/carer is likely to endanger the child or place the child at further risk. The decision not to inform the parent/carer should be briefly recorded together with the reasons for not doing so.
- e. When allegation is against the DLP, the Chairperson then assumes responsibility for reporting the matter to the HSE and filling in the standard reporting form.
- f. Where there are allegations or suspicions of Peer Abuse the DLP will follow the same procedures.
  - Parents of all parties will be notified and the DLP will inform the Chairperson.
  - Principal and class teachers will make arrangements to meet separately with all parents, to resolve the matter.
  - The school will make arrangements to minimise the possibility of the abusive behaviour recurring.

## **3. Child Protection Meetings (Case Conferences)**

- a. A request is made from the HSE through the DLP who should consult with the Chairman of the BOM of the school. The Chairperson may seek clarification through the DLP as to why the attendance of the school employee is necessary and ascertain who else will be present.
- b. The school employee may complete a report for the meeting/conference. (See Appendix 3, Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, DES).

- c. The school employee will be advised if children/parents/guardians are going to be present. The school employee may contact the Chairperson of the Child Meeting for advice.
- d. The school employee may keep a child's behaviour under closer observation, if requested to do so. This may include observing the child's behaviour, peer interactions, school progress or informal conversations.
- e. In all cases, individuals who refer or discuss their concerns about the care and protection of children with HSE staff, should be informed of the likely steps to be taken by the professionals involved. Where appropriate and within the normal limits of confidentiality, reporting staff will be kept informed about the outcomes of any enquiry or investigation following on from their report.
- f. Teachers attending a child protection meeting/case conference should familiarise themselves with the protocol outlined on pages 49 and 50 of Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.

#### 4. **Organisational Implications**

School procedures already in place and new procedures being put in place will be examined with reference to the Children First Guidelines and any Child Protection issues that may arise will be addressed.

The following issues have been addressed in Policy reviews:

##### **Accidents:**

While every precaution will be taken under our Health and Safety Statement to ensure the safety of children, we realise that accidents will happen. Accidents will be noted on an Incident Report form and will be addressed under our Accident Policy as part of Health and Safety.

##### **Attendance:**

Our school attendance will be monitored. With regards to child protection we will pay particular attention to trends in non-attendance. We will also monitor non-attendance in correlation with signs of neglect/ physical/ emotional abuse. In September 2017, in accordance with the E.W.B guidelines a new Attendance Policy has been devised and is currently being implemented.

##### **Behaviour:**

Children are encouraged at all times to play co-operatively and inappropriate behaviour will be addressed under the Code of Behaviour. If an incident occurs which we consider to be of a sexualised nature we will notify the DLP who will record it and respond in accordance with the Child Protection guidelines.

##### **Bullying:**

Bullying behaviour will be addressed under the Anti- Bullying Policy. If the behaviour involved is of a sexualised nature or regarded as being particularly abusive then the matter will be referred to the DLP.

##### **Children travelling in staff cars:**

Members of school staff will not carry children alone in their cars at any time. If left with no alternative but to transport a child, three pupils are required to travel with the staff member. Where possible an additional staff member will travel.

##### **Communication:**

Every effort will be made to enhance teacher- pupil communication. If pupils have concerns they will be listened to sympathetically. The SPHE/ Stay Safe/ RSE/ RE/ Oral language programmes allow for open pupil-teacher communication, which is hoped will aid the teacher- pupil relationship. If the teachers have to

communicate with pupils on a one- to- one basis, they are requested to leave the classroom door open or have another child or member of staff present.

### **Induction of Teachers and Ancillary Staff:**

The DLP will be responsible for informing new teachers and ancillary staff of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2011. The DLP will provide a copy of chapters 2&5 and chapter 3 (3.2) to all new staff. All new teachers are expected to teach the objectives of the SPHE programme. The NIPT Team is responsible for the mentoring of new teachers. Assistant Principals will be responsible for supporting new teachers as they implement the SPHE objectives. Margaret Butler is also responsible for ensuring that new teachers know how to use Aladdin Connect and will inform the teachers of record keeping procedures.

### **Induction of pupils:**

All parents and children will be made aware of the attendance rules and their implications as laid down in the Education Welfare Act (2000). All parents will be informed of the programme in place in the school that deal with personal development e.g. RSE and SPHE. Parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the class teacher / principal if they wish to discuss their child's progress/ attendance. All parents have access to a copy of the school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies on the school website.

### **Record keeping:**

All files relating to the children's progress are kept in a locked filing cabinet. Teachers will keep each child's file updated with results of assessments carried out, dates and details of meetings with parents and notes from parents. Sensitive information regarding children will be shared on a need-to-know-basis.

### **Supervision:**

Supervision is organised within the school to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children at all break times and on school trips. A yard duty rota is prepared on an annual basis to ensure children are supervised in the morning, during breaks and while leaving the school. An Acceptable Use policy is in place to insure that children are supervised while on the internet.

### **Visibility:**

Teachers will ensure that pupils are visible in the schoolyard. Pupils will not be allowed spend time in classrooms where they are not under adult supervision. They are not to leave the schoolyard or to engage with adults who are outside of the schoolyard.

### **Visitors:**

Exceptional arrangements are in place to comply with Covid-19 protocols. There is now a security system in place whereby only staff members can enter the school by using a 'fob system'. All visitors must enter through the front office and report to the secretary or a member of staff.

Staff members on yard duty will be aware of visitors entering the schoolyard and will ascertain their intentions. They will be supervised in the discharge of their business. When people are collecting pupils early they must report to the office and sign the pupil out.

Visitors to the school who are in regular contact with the pupils will be made aware of our Child Protection policy and will have to adhere to its principles.

### **Children with specific toileting/ intimate needs:**

- In all situations where a pupil needs assistance with toileting/ intimate care, their needs will be discussed at an I.E.P. meeting and the school procedure will be outlined to parents. The purpose of the

meeting will be to ascertain the specific needs of the child and to determine how the school can best meet those needs.

- Where possible the pupil will be involved in identification of his/ her personal requirements.
- The staff to be involved in this care will be identified and provision will be made for occasions when the particular staff involved are absent. A written copy of what has been agreed will be made up and kept in the child's file.
- Two members of staff will be present when dealing with the intimate care/ toileting needs.
- Staff will wear protective gloves.

#### **Toileting accidents:**

- In the first instance the child will be offered fresh clothing to clean & change themselves.
- If the pupil needs assistance the procedure is to take place in the presence of 2 staff members.
- Parents will be notified of these accidents.

#### **Success Criteria:**

We will evaluate the success of this policy using the following criteria:

- Delivery and participation by all staff in training.
- Delivery of SPHE curriculum.
- Resources to support the delivery of SPHE.
- Delivery and participation by children in the Stay Safe Programme.
- Assessment of these procedures by participants following a child protection case.
- Feedback from all staff.

#### **Timeframe for Implementation:**

These procedures will be implemented following ratification by the BOM.

#### **Timeframe for Review:**

At the first staff meeting of every year the DLP will remind all staff members of the guidelines and copies of chapter 2&5 and chapter 3 (3.2) will be made available to all staff members in a folder in each classroom.

A review will be conducted \_\_\_\_\_ or if necessary; should a child protection issue arise at any time.

#### **Responsibility for Review:**

- BOM
- DLP
- Principal
- All Staff

#### **Ratification and Communication:**

The revised policy was ratified by the BOM in \_\_\_\_\_.

A copy of the policy is available for viewing in the office and will be published on our website.

Signed: James Stanton  
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 19/01/2022

Signed: Donal O' Shea  
Principal/Secretary of the Board of Management

Date: 19/01/2022