

# **Child Protection Policy**

## **Scoil Mhuire Ruan N.S.**

### **Introduction and Rationale**

The staff of Scoil Mhuire, Ruan updated this document in December 2011 as a response to recent changes in legislation and publication of the following documents. It was further reviewed and updated in Jan.2014 and the changes approved by the board of management at its meeting on 30/1/14. Further revision took place in March 2015 and changes approved by the board of management at its meeting on the 18/03/15.

- Circular 65/2011-“Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (DES)
- “Children First; National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children.” (2011)
- Child Protection Guidelines for Primary and Post Primary Schools (DES)

This document further develops previous policy in this area and takes account of the provisions of the following pieces of legislation. Parents Representatives were consulted in reviewing this policy.

- Children Act 2001
- Child Care Act 1991
- Criminal Justice act 2006 ( Section 176 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 introduced the criminal charge of ‘reckless endangerment of children’ It states:

‘A person, having authority or control over a child or abuser, who intentionally or recklessly endangers a child by-

(a) causing or permitting any child to be placed or left in a situation which creates a substantial risk to the child of being a victim of serious harm or sexual abuse, or

(b) failing to take reasonable steps to protect a child from such a risk while knowing that the child is in such a situation, is guilty of an offence’.

- The Education Act 1998
- The Education Welfare Act 2000.
- The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998.
- Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003.
- Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003.
- Non-Fatal Offences against the Person Act 1997
- Domestic Violence Act 1996

A copy of the school’s child protection policy which includes the names of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the Deputy DLP has been made available to all school personnel and the Parents’ Association and will be accessible to parents on request.

### **Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School**

Scoil Mhuire Ruan National School seeks to help the children to grow and develop into healthy, confident, mature adults, capable of realising 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 they will be acted on.

## **Guidelines for School Personnel**

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

- The Board of Management has appointed the Principal Mr. Cyril Lyons, as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) in Scoil Mhuire Ruan National School to have specific responsibility for child protection. The deputy principal, Ms. Ní Chonghaile, has been appointed as Deputy DLP, to take the place of the DLP if he is unavailable for whatever reason.
- 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/she is replaced by the BOM for whatever reason.

### **2.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- The BOM has primary responsibility for the care and welfare of the pupils.
- The DLP has specific responsibility for child protection in the school.
- All staff members 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 (BOM)**

- To arrange for the planning, development and implementation of an effective child protection programme.
- To monitor and evaluate its effectiveness.
- To provide appropriate staff development and training

*Specifically the Board of Management will:*

- Appoint a DLP and deputy DLP.
- Have clear procedures for dealing with allegations or suspicions of child abuse (See below)
- Monitor the progress of children at risk
- Ensure that curricular provision is in place for the prevention of child abuse.
- Investigate and respond to allegations of child abuse against one of the school's employees which have been reported to the H.S.E. or Gardai.
- To decide on teachers attendance at child protection meetings/case conferences and advise teachers before attending such meetings/conferences.

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

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

- Staff members are provided with copies of the following guidance and it is the responsibility of all staff to familiarise themselves with the guidance.
- “Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011” especially

- Part II (2) Definition & Recognition of Child Abuse

- Part II (3) Basis for Reporting & Standard Reporting Procedures

- Appendix 1 Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse

## **Guidelines for teacher and staff members in handling disclosures from children**

Where a child discloses alleged abuse to a staff member, the person receiving that 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:

- Listen to the child.
- Do not ask leading questions or make suggestions to the child.
- Do not stop a child recalling significant events.
- Do not over-react.
- Confidentiality should not be assured – explain that further help will have to be sought.
- Record the discussion accurately noting
  - *What?, who? where and when?(consider age of the child)*
  - *Descriptions and possible sketches of physical injuries.*
  - *Explanations of injuries using direct quotations if appropriate.*
- The staff member should obtain only necessary relevant facts. It is not the responsibility of school personnel to investigate allegations of abuse.
- The DLP should then be informed and given relevant records.
- The records created shall be regarded as highly confidential and placed in a secure location by the DLP with restricted access, having regard to the Data Protection Acts.
- 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.

## **Suspicious of Abuse**

- Staff members who suspect abuse should refer to Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, (2011), especially
  - *Part ii (2): Definition & Recognition of Child Abuse*

*Part ii (3): Basis and Reporting and Standard Reporting Procedures*

- *Appendix 1: Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse*
- Staff members should observe and record over time the dates, signs, symptoms, behaviour causing them concern.
- They should inform the DLP and pass on all records.
- Emphasis on importance of understanding that neglect is the most common form of child abuse.

## **2.3 Role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP)**

- The DLP acts as a liaison with outside agencies, Tusla Child and Family Agency, Gardaí and other parties with child protection concerns
- The DLP will inform all school personnel of the availability of the Children First Guidance in the school. S/he will advise on good practice
- The DLP will be available to staff for consultation regarding suspicions or disclosures of abuse. S/he will keep records of these consultations.
- The DLP will seek advice from the H S E.
- The DLP will report suspicions and allegations of child abuse to Tusla Child and Family Agency or/ and Garda Síochána based on this advice.
- The DLP will maintain proper records in a secure, confidential manner and in a secure location.
- The DLP will keep up to date on current developments regarding child protection.

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

- Where the DLP/Deputy DLP have concerns about a child, but are not sure whether to report the matter to Tusla Child and Family Agency, they should seek appropriate advice. To do this the DLP/Deputy should make informal contact with the assigned (on duty) Social Worker. The DLP/Deputy in this case, should be explicit that s/he is requesting advice and not making a report. If advised to report the matter, the DLP will act on that advice.
- A report will then be made to Tusla Child and Family Agency by the DLP/Deputy in person, by telephone or in writing. In the event of an emergency or non-availability of Tusla Child and Family Agency staff, the reports 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 Part II (Section 4.8) of Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2011.
- A standard reporting form is completed by the DLP/Deputy as comprehensively as possible Appendix 3: Standard Report Form for reporting child protection and/ or welfare to Tusla Child and Family Agency. (Children First: National Guidance for the protection and Welfare of Children, 2011 available to download @ [www.tusla.ie/go/children.first](http://www.tusla.ie/go/children.first). Click download children first. Then click standard report form
- 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.
- When the allegation is against the DLP, the chairperson then assumes responsibility for reporting the matter to Tusla Child and Family Agency and filling in the standard reporting form.
- 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 behavior recurring.

### **3.0 CHILD PROTECTION MEETINGS/CASE CONFERENCES**

- When a request is made from Tusla Child and Family Agency through the D.L.P. he/she will consult with the Chairperson of the B.O.M. The Chairperson may seek clarification through the D.L.P. as to why the attendance of the school employee is necessary and ascertain who else will be present.
- The school employee may complete a report for the meeting/conference. It should be noted that individual Tusla Child and Family Agency areas may provide forms or templates for the report.
- 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 Protection Meeting for advice if concerned about Parent/Carer involvement.
- 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.
- In all cases, individuals who refer or discuss their concerns about the care and protection of children with Tusla Child and Family Agency 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
- Teachers attending a child protection meeting/case conference should familiarise themselves with the protocol outlined in Part III (5) Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011).

## **4.0 ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

School procedures will be examined on an ongoing basis with reference to the safety and welfare of children. The following policies/procedures have been examined in this statement:

### **Administration of First Aid**

- While every precaution will be taken to ensure the safety of children we realise that accidents will happen.
- The First Aid box is located in the staff kitchen and in the event of a playground accident the adult on supervision will deal with it.
- Accidents where administration is provided to cuts/gashes and head injuries (swellings and bumps) will be noted in our Incident Book and Parents notified.

### **Assembly of Pupils**

- Parents will be reminded annually that the school only accepts responsibility for supervision during school hours.

### **Attendance**

- School attendance is monitored on a daily basis by the class teacher and on a weekly basis by the class teacher and Principal.
- With regards to child protection we will pay particular attention to trends of non-attendance.
- We will monitor non attendance in correlation with signs of neglect/physical /emotional abuse.

### **Behaviour**

- Children are encouraged at all times to play co-operatively. Any inappropriate behaviour will be addressed under our Code of Behaviour.
- If an incident occurs which is considered to be of a sexualised nature the DLP is notified, the incident recorded and responded to appropriately.

### **Bullying**

- Bullying behaviour will be addressed under our 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.
- We recognise that bullying can be pupil/pupil; pupil/staff; staff/pupil; parent/staff; staff/parents; staff/staff.

### **Changing Arrangements for PE/Games**

- In the absence of changing facilities in the school, the boys' and girls' toilets and cloakroom areas are to be used for these purposes.
- A supervising presence can be maintained by regularly knocking at the door and by informing pupils in the dressing room that you are entering.
- Pupils should be regularly informed of the importance of good behaviour in dressing rooms and should be encouraged to tell the supervising adults of any incidents which occur.

## **Communication**

- Every effort will be made to enhance pupil –teacher communication.
- If pupils have concerns they will be listened sympathetically.
- The S.P.H.E/Oral Language R.E programmes allow for open pupil-teacher communication, which is hoped will aid the pupil-teacher relationship.

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

- New permanent and temporary staff will be required to provide written evidence of Garda/Police vetting and a Statutory Declaration must be provided by all persons appointed to teaching and non-teaching positions.
- The DLP will be responsible for informing all new teachers and ancillary staff of the school Child protection Policy.
- The DLP will give a copy of this Policy to all new staff.
- All new teachers are expected to teach the SPHE programme.
- The School Principal is also responsible for ensuring that new teachers know how to fill in the roll book correctly and informing the teacher of record keeping procedures within the school.

## **Induction of Pupils**

- All Parents and children will be made of aware of attendance rules and their implications as laid down in the Education Welfare Act (2000)
- All parents will be informed of the programmes in place in the school that deal with Personal Development e.g. RSE.
- A letter informing all parents of the teaching of Stay Safe and R.S.E., will be issued annually.
- All new parents are given a copy of the School's enrolment policy, which outlines the procedures parents and children should use when contacting the school if there are absences or concerns of an educational/personal/family matter.
- Parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the class teacher/principal if they wish to discuss their child's progress.
- All parents are given access to the school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies.

## **One to One Teaching/Communications with Pupils/Privacy**

- Where one to one teaching/communication is necessary the following guidelines will apply.
- Teachers will endeavour to ensure visibility by leaving the door open or teaching in a high visibility location within the room.
- Staff should avoid being one on one with a child in the toilet areas /ensure that another adult / teacher is aware that one is in the toilet with a child.
- Supervising adults should ensure that groups of pupils don't congregate in toilet areas.

## **Pupils with Special Needs or Disability**

- Pupils with special needs or disability may depend on adults more than other pupils for their care and safety, and so sensitivity and clear communication are particularly important.
- Where it is necessary to carry out tasks of a personal nature for a pupil with special needs, this should be done with the full understanding and consent of parents or guardians.
- In carrying out such personal care tasks, sensitivity must be shown to the pupil and the tasks should be undertaken with the utmost discretion.

## **Record Keeping**

- Teachers will keep each child's file updated with results of assessments carried out and relevant notes from parents.
- The records are kept in the Pupils' Filing Cabinet in the Principal's Office which is locked at all times.
- Sensitive information regarding children will be shared on a need-to-know basis.
- Information relating to allegations or suspicions of Child Abuse will be passed on to the DLP who will maintain records in a secure file.

## **School Outings**

- Pupil's behaviour on outings will comply with the standard set down in the school's

### Code of Behaviour.

- Ideally there should be a supervision ratio of 10:1 (adult), depending on the length of duration of the activity.
- The teacher in charge should take a tour kit containing first aid materials, mobile phone, and pupil contact details.
- Where a bus is hired for class/schools the teacher in charge should accompany the pupils on the bus.
- It is the responsibility of the bus company to ensure that the vehicle has adequate

seat belts and meets all safety standards and that the driver's drive in a safe and

responsible manner.

## **Supervision**

- The school's procedures for supervision will be followed by all the staff to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children at all break times.
- A rota is displayed on the Staff Notice Board to cover 11 o'clock and lunchtime breaks.
- Children will not be allowed to enter the school during break time without permission from the supervising teacher.
- Children who have to remain indoors at break time will all be accommodated in the open area opposite the Secretary's office and in view of the staffroom.
- Pupils are not allowed to leave the school premises during school time unless they are being collected by a parent/guardian.
- Any persons coming onto school grounds during break-time should be approached by the adult on supervision duty and directed as appropriate.
- People who have no reason to be on school premises should be advised to leave the school in the interests of the safety of the pupils.

## **Swimming**

- Children will be transported to the swimming pool by bus.
- The Class teacher, and SNA where necessary, will accompany the children to the pool.
- All pupils will change in the Changing Rooms unless written request from parents to change in toilets is provided.

## **Travelling in cars for school activities**

- Members of the school staff will not carry pupils alone in their cars at any time.
- Staff members transporting pupils in their cars should ensure that there are two or more pupils in the car and that they are seated in the back seat.
- The number of pupils carried should not exceed the number of seat belts available.
- Pupils should normally be collected from and dropped back to school

## **Use of Images of Children**

- The school undertakes to seek parents' or guardians' permission for the use of photographs of pupils for any publicity purposes.
- Consent should be obtained from children re photography, especially older children.
- Only images of pupils in appropriate dress will be used.
- Inappropriate use of images of pupils will be brought to the attention of the DLP.
- No images of any pupil may be taken by an external agency or person without receiving the prior authorisation of the school principal.

## **Vetting**

- All persons being appointed to teaching positions of any duration must provide proof of vetting in the same or previous calendar years.
- All persons being appointed to non teaching positions of any duration must be vetted prior to commencing employment unless they have already been vetted through the same registered organisation during the same or previous calendar year.
- Any other persons (non employees) such as volunteers, sport coaches, parent supervisors, drivers etc or anyone who may have unsupervised access to children must be vetted. Vetting of these persons should be done by the relevant sporting, voluntary or community organisation. The BOM must request a copy of the Garda vetting form and two verified references from the employing agency, e.g. G.A.A.

## **Visibility**

- Staff members on yard supervision will ensure that children are visible in the schoolyard.
- Pupils will not be allowed to spend time in classrooms or toilets where they would not be under adult supervision.
- They are not to leave the school grounds or to engage with adults who are outside of the school grounds.

## **Visitors/Coaching/Adults invited into the school to work with pupils**

- Visitors working with pupils must discuss and clear the content of their work with the teacher in charge or principal in advance of taking the class.
- Class teacher/teacher in charge should inform visitors/coaches working with pupils of their responsibilities under Child Protection Guidelines which include use of respectful language and respectful attitude towards all pupils, the avoidance of one to one situations with pupils, the avoidance of avoidable physical contact with pupils and the importance of opportunities for inclusion of all pupils in the activity.
- Class teacher/Teacher in charge must remain with his/her class at all times or in the case of having to leave organises for his/her class to be supervised. The teacher remains responsible for the pupils in their care and therefore class discipline/safety etc. is the responsibility of the class teacher.

## **5.0 CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS**

Scoil Mhuire Ruan National School endeavours to create a positive school climate which is open, inclusive, respectful, and fair. The strategies we will use to create this environment involve:

*Creating a health-promoting physical environment*

*Enhancing self-esteem*

*Fostering respect for diversity*

*Building effective communication within the school*

*Developing appropriate home-school communication*

*Catering for individual needs*

*Developing democratic process*

*Fostering inclusive and respectful language*

We strive to ensure that our school will be physically and emotionally safe and we will deliver the curricular content of our SPHE programme with a view to giving our children the protective skills of self-esteem and assertiveness.

The SPHE programme will be supported by the use of the Walk Tall materials, RSE resources, Stay Safe resources and North-Western Health board resources.

### **Success Criteria**

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

- Delivery and participation by all staff in training
- Delivery of the 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 teachers of the guidance and copies of Part II(2) and Part II(3) and Appendix 3 of Children First; National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011) will be given to those who require them.

A review will be conducted based on the criteria above, following any and all incidents when the guidelines are used.

**Responsibility for Review.**

- DLP, Principal and Staff.

**Ratification and Communication.**

Copies of this policy were made available to the parents of the children in the school who requested them and the policy was also available on the school website. Parents will be reminded of the policy at the start of each school year.

The policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire Ruan N.S. 19/04/2016

Linda Hannon

Chairperson, Board of Management