

# REVISED CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

## Introductory Statement

The Staff, Parents and Board of Management of S.N. Clochar Mhuire, St. John's Rd, Wexford have developed and agreed this policy in line with the current recommendations and guidelines relating to child abuse prevention and child protection guidelines.

## Rationale

The BOM of S.N. Clochar Mhuire 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 S.N. Clochar Mhuire proposes to implement these guidelines in order to ensure the protection and welfare of all children attending our school.

## Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

S.N. Clochar Mhuire 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 are confident that these concerns will be acted on.

This policy addresses the responsibilities of the school in the followings areas:

### PREVENTION – curricular provision

### PROCEDURES – procedures for dealing with concerns /disclosures

### PRACTICE – best practice in child protection

An individual copy of this policy document and a copy of the Department of Education and Science Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures will be made available to all staff. It is incumbent on all staff to familiarise themselves with 'Children First' and the DES child protection guidelines and procedures.

### Aims

This policy aims to:

- Create a safe, trusting, responsive and caring environment
- Provide a personal safety skills education which specifically addresses abuse prevention for all children in the school
- Develop awareness and responsibility in the area 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 members are aware of and familiar with the 'Children First' and the DES guidelines and procedures in relation to reporting concerns and/or disclosures of child abuse
- Provide for ongoing training in this and related areas for all school staff.

## APPENDIX 1

### Prevention

#### A. The Resources in use in the school:

- Stay Safe Programme
- Stay Safe pack – “personal safety skills for children with learning difficulties”

The Stay Safe programme is the primary resource used in this school to provide education for children on abuse prevention. The programme is taught as part of the schools' Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum under the strand unit Safety and Protection.

#### B. The objectives of the Stay Safe programme:

- To develop children's self esteem, assertiveness and self protection skills.
- To teach children that they should always tell an adult about any situation which they find unsafe, upsetting, threatening, dangerous or abusive.
- To give children the skills necessary to enable them to recognize and resist abuse/victimization/bullying
- To teach the rules
  1. Say No, Get Away and Tell
  2. Never Keep Touch A Secret

## C. The formal lessons of the Stay Safe programme:

The formal lessons of the Stay Safe programme will be taught in their entirety in all classes during March/April and May every second year, in accordance with our SPHE two-year cycle plan. Staff will make every effort to ensure that the messages of the programme are reinforced whenever possible.

## D. Informing and involving parents/guardians:

On enrolment of their child, parents will be informed that the Stay Safe programme is in use in the school and a copy of the 'Stay Safe: A Parent's Guide' provided, when requested.

### Induction of Pupils

All parents and children will be made 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, Walk Tall and SPHE. 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 a copy of the school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies.

## E. Other Considerations:

1. Teaching the programme in a multi cultural/Multi lingual situation – Parents/guardians are expected, (as with all letters from school) to seek translation, to establish the content of the Stay Safe letter. If the parent/guardian is having difficulty with translation, the school will make every effort to help them.  
In the case of EAL pupils, where necessary, the teacher and EAL teacher will collaborate to ensure that the child understands to the best of his/her ability, the content of each lesson.
2. Children with Special Educational needs:  
The Stay Safe pack “ Personal safety skills for children with learning difficulties” could be used to ensure that the needs of children with special educational needs are met, with due regard to the vulnerabilities of the individual child. Consideration could also be given as to how classwork can be supplemented by SEN teachers ( oral language, vocabulary development and communication work based around Stay Safe)
3. Ancillary staff should be aware of the objectives of stay safe programme, and should support, the teaching staff where necessary, to achieve these objectives.
4. Education for children around the safe use of technology particularly with regard to mobile phones, internet use will take place in conjunction with in our Internet safety and mobile phone policies.
5. If a parent wishes to withdraw a child from RSE lessons, the class teacher, where possible, will inform the parent of the time the lesson/s are taking place, and the parent may be asked to make arrangements to bring their child home. Alternatively, the class teacher might find it necessary to make arrangements for the child to go to another room for the duration of the lesson/s.
6. If a teacher wishes to opt out of teaching the sensitive aspects of the SPHE, the Post holder with responsibility for SPHE should be informed. Provision will then be made for the class involved to receive tuition from another source ( another teacher in school/ external personnel)

## Procedures

All staff (Teachers, SNAs, ancillary, secretarial, caretaking etc.) in this school will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in 'Children First' and the Department of Education and Science document, 'Child Protection, Guidelines and Procedures'.

**The Board of Management of this school has appointed Mr Pat Gately as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP), and Mrs Ann Woodbyrne as the deputy DLP.**

The staff and management of this school have agreed that:

- All concerns/disclosures involving child protection/child welfare issues will be reported in the first instance to the DLP (deputy DLP where appropriate)
- Each report to the DLP will be dated and signed by the person making that report
- A strict adherence to maintaining confidentiality – information regarding concerns or disclosures of abuse-should only be given on a 'need to know' basis.

## Practice

The staff and board of management of this school have identified the following as areas of specific concern in relation to child protection. Following discussion and consultation, the staff and board of management have agreed that the following practices be adopted :

### A Recruitment of staff(See Circular 63/2010)

All applicants should be asked to supply in writing information which includes

- appropriate personal details
- a resumé of past and current work/volunteering experience, indicating relevant qualifications or skills acquired
- at least two written references- verification of references should be sought through making verbal contact with the referees
- Statutory Declaration+ Form of Undertaking.

*Garda Vetting*:, Where necessary, should always be sought, but it is important to note that this is not always a complete safeguard. Where a person is in a position to build a relationship with a child then every effort will be made to get vetting.

*Backgrounds checks* are undertaken when possible on anyone being considered to assist in a voluntary capacity, or seeking work experience in the school.

It is the responsibility of the Board of Management to ensure that all personnel are properly supervised and supported in the work they are doing.

### Induction of Teachers and Ancillary Staff

The DLP will be responsible for informing all new teachers and ancillary staff of the Children First Guidelines (1999). The DLP will give a copy of this Child protection policy to all new staff. All new teachers are expected to teach the objectives in the SPHE programme. The Special Duties Post holder is responsible for supporting new teachers as they implement the SPHE objectives.

### B. General Conduct:

It is imperative that in all dealings with the children in our care, that a balance is struck between the rights of the child and the need for intervention.

Any physical contact between school personnel and the child should be in response to the needs of the child, and not the needs of the adult. While physical contact may be used to comfort, reassure or assist a child the following should be factors in assessing its appropriateness:

- It is acceptable to the child concerned.
- It is open and not secretive
- It is appropriate to the age and developmental stage of the child.

School personnel should not do things of a personal nature for which the child can do for him/herself.

Inappropriate physical contact also includes rough physical play, and horseplay ( tickling, etc). All children should be treated with equal respect –

School personnel should not engage in, or allow:

- The use of inappropriate language or behaviours, e.g sarcasm
- Physical punishment of any kind
- Sexually provocative games, or sexually suggestive comments about or to a child.
- The use of sexually explicit material, etc

All media products, cds, DVDs computer software, etc should be checked with regard to age and suitability. Where a doubt exists with regard to suitability of material, parents, principal, and/or Board of Management should be consulted as necessary.

It is incumbent on the Board of Management to ensure that all school personnel are familiar with the DES guidelines on child protection and that these guidelines are adhered to in the event of concerns or disclosures around child protection. The DLP ( or, where necessary, the deputy DLP) should be notified promptly of any concerns with regard to the behaviour of a staff member, or any allegations of child abuse made by a child or an adult. In the event that the concern involves the DLP, the chairperson of the BOM should be notified.

**A disclosure of abuse must never be ignored.**

## Behaviour of pupils

Children are to be encouraged at all times to play co-operatively. Inappropriate behaviour will be addressed under our Code of Behaviour policy. If an incident occurs which we consider to be of a sexualised nature, the staff member will notify the DLP, who will record it and respond to it appropriately.

### C. Toileting/Intimate Care: See separate policy.

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

A meeting should be held with all school personnel involved with the child, along with the child's parents. At that meeting the needs of the child should be addressed and agreement reached as to how to meet those needs. Agreed practices must be acceptable to the staff involved, the child, and the parents.. The parents of the child involved will be requested to give written consent to these agreed practices. The Board of Management should be aware of practices agreed.

#### Toileting "accidents"

Parents of incoming Junior Infants are informed at the Infants meeting in June that a staff member may need to tend to their child when no alternative is available.

If a child is unable to attend to him/herself, and the parents are unable to attend to deal with the situation, a staff member may attend to a child. In this situation, the pupils toilets should be used, but the staff toilets can be used, when necessary. Another adult may be asked to stay in the vicinity for the duration, especially if the first adult has to accompany the child into the cubicle. A note should be kept of the incident, and parents should be informed of the incident.

### D. Changing for Sports, swimming and school concerts/shows:

#### Swimming

Children will be brought by bus to the swimming pool. Whenever possible, two adults will accompany the children. Teachers will act in 'loco parentis' and will ensure to the best of their ability that the pupils will return to the school safely.

Where a child needs assistance with changing, an agreement should be made between parents and staff as to how best those needs can be met.

Volunteers/work experience students should not assist with changing, and should not be left to supervise alone

( except in exceptional circumstances)

Staff should avoid assisting children with anything of a personal nature which the child can do for him/herself.

A report of any incident should be made to the principal, parents and Board of management, as appropriate.

#### Sports:

PE uniforms are worn to school on PE days. Occasionally children are required to change for school matches. In these instances, the children are in the more senior classes and are capable of attending to their own needs. Where possible, children change in school prior to leaving for the matches.

#### School plays/concerts/etc

Children should change into costumes by themselves wherever possible. Some children may need assistance. This should take place in the classroom with other children, and preferably, another adult present. In instances from 2<sup>nd</sup> –6<sup>th</sup> class, where a class has a male teacher, a female teacher (or a female SNA) should be asked to supervise.

### E. Supervision of children:

The school's supervision policy will be followed by all staff to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children at all breaks during the school day. A rota will be displayed in the staffroom to cover morning and lunchtime break-times.

#### Visibility

Teachers on duty will ensure that children are visible in the schoolyard. Children will be discouraged from spending time in classrooms or toilets where they would not be under adult supervision. They are not to leave the school yard, nor are they to engage with adults who are outside of the school yard without permission from a teacher .

#### Visitors

Teachers on yard duty should be aware of visitors entering the schoolyard and should ascertain their intentions. The teacher should escort the visitor to the office, where a member of staff can help them with their business.

#### 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.

#### 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 in our Incident book and will be addressed under our Health and Safety policy.

#### First Aid

If a child has an accident in school, s/he will be accompanied to the office for the administration of basic First Aid where appropriate. When deemed appropriate by the teacher/principal, the parent/guardian will be contacted to inform them of the incident and to collect the child, if necessary. All serious incidents are recorded in the "Incident Book".

#### Court Orders

If the school is aware of a court order being in place which prevents someone from having access to a child, a copy of that order should be requested by the school. In the event of the parent/guardian's non compliance with the court order, the Gardai should be summoned to the school to enforce it.

#### Collection of a child by someone unknown:

Children are reminded that they should be aware of who is to collect them from school. They are also reminded that they should never go home with anyone other than the person with whom the arrangement has been made. This issue is covered comprehensively during the teaching of Stay Safe. If a teacher is aware that a person other than normal is collecting a child from school, the teacher/office should contact a parent/guardian to confirm arrangements.

#### Children travelling in staff cars

School personnel should not travel alone with a child in their car at any time. In an emergency situation, if this guideline is not followed, the teacher (staff member) should inform another teacher or staff member of what is happening.

#### **F. One to One teaching:**

One to one teaching may be provided if deemed appropriate. In these instances, every effort should be made to ensure the protection of both pupil and staff member. With this in mind, glass panels have been fitted to all classroom doors. If a child needs one to one teaching, parents should be advised of these arrangements. If teachers need to communicate with pupils on a one-to-one basis (other than one to one teaching), they are requested to leave the classroom door partially open.

#### **G. Visitors/Guest speakers:**

Visitors/Guest speakers should not be left alone with children. Every effort will be made to check out the credentials of the visitor/guest speaker in the school and to ensure that the content/material in use is appropriate.

#### **H. Internet Safety:**

Child protection concerns are addressed in the school's Acceptable Use Policy part of our IT Policy.

#### **I. Other Considerations:**

##### Record Keeping

The school will keep will keep each child's file updated with results of assessments carried out, dates and details of meetings with parents and notes from parents. The records are kept in the office which is locked. Roll books will be updated daily. Sensitive information regarding children will be shared on a need-to-know basis. All educational files of pupils who no longer attend this school are kept in the filing cabinet in the principal's office for 10 years or until the child reaches 18 years.

##### Attendance

Our school attendance will be monitored by the Principal. 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.

#### **Links to other policy/planning areas**

- SPHE curriculum – Strand Unit on 'Safety and Protection',
- The School Code of Discipline
- Anti – Bullying
- Health and Safety Statement
- Information and Communication Technology
- Special Needs
- School Tours/Outings

#### **Review and Monitoring**

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Board of Management on an annual basis and when the need arises. The board of management will ensure that adequate training/information and support is provided for all staff, parents and board of management members.

Policy adopted by the BOM on April 4<sup>th</sup> 2009.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson

## Child Protection Guidelines Checklist for School Employees

**Designated Liaison Person:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Deputy Designated Liaison Person:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **If a child discloses information to you:-**

- Listen
- Do not ask leading questions
- Offer reassurance but do not promise not to tell
- Explain that other adults may need to be told - DLP
- Do not stop the child speaking
- Do not over react or comment
- Inform DLP - If you have a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern that a child is at risk or has suffered abuse, the DLP should contact the Health Board for advice
- At the earliest opportunity, record accurately what the child has said – Using the child’s own words. Record date/time and context of the disclosure. Use child’s registration number – Not child’s name
- Facts only
- Sketch signs of physical injury if appropriate
- Retain records for a period of 21 years in keeping with the school’s Record Keeping Policy

### **The following should also be reported to the DLP:**

- An account from a person who saw a child being abused
- Injury consistent with abuse
- Dysfunctional behaviour
- Implausible explanations for injury or behaviour
- Consistent evidence over a period of time that a child is being emotionally or physically neglected

### **Health Board Response:**

- School is asked to monitor the situation
- Formal report is requested , sent by DLP and on receipt case is allocated to Social Worker
- Preliminary enquiry – Screening process
- Initial assessment

### **Possible outcomes:**

- Case closed
- Family support
- Child Protection Plan (usually following a case conference)