



Scoil Mhuire NS

Gortanumera, Ballyshrulue, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway

☎: 090 9741624

Child Protection Policy

Introductory Statement

The staff and BOM of Scoil Mhuire N.S. have developed and agreed this policy in line with the current recommendations and guidelines related to child abuse prevention and child protection guidelines.

This policy addresses the responsibilities of the school in the following areas:-

- (a) Prevention - curriculum provision
- (b) Procedures - procedures for dealing with concerns/disclosures.
- (c) Practice - best practice in child protection.

An individual copy of this policy document and the appended section from the Department of Education and Skills Child protection Procedures will be made available to all staff. It is incumbent on all staff to familiarize 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.

PREVENTION

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 SPHE curriculum under the strand unit Safety and Protection (Personal Safety).

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

The formal lessons of the programme will be taught in their entirety every second year in accordance with the SPHE two-year cycle. Staff will make every possible effort to ensure that the messages of the programme are reinforced whenever possible.

Issues that have been considered:-

Addressing the teaching of Stay Safe.

In a multi-class situation the content will be aimed at the lower end.

What extra provision do we need to make for special needs pupils?

Use will be made of the Stay Safe pack for children with learning difficulties when the need arises. The learning support teacher, resource teacher, special needs assistant will support a programme of prevention.

How will pupils who are withdrawn be dealt with?

Procedures

All staff (teachers, special needs assistants, ancillary staff, secretarial, caretaking etc. in this school will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in 'Children First, Guidelines and Procedures'.

(See attached Appendix, pages 5 to 20 from the above DES guidelines)

The Board of Management of this school has appointed

Anne Ryan as the Designated Liaison Person (DPL) and

Mairéad Madden as the deputy DLP

(The DES guidelines recommend the appointment of the principal or another senior staff member as DLP).

Practice

Practices will vary from school to school depending on the needs of the pupils, the staffing, the physical layout etc. It is extremely important that school staff be given an opportunity to identify and agree practices to be adopted. A written protocol outlining agreed practices should be included in this policy document, The following are some of the main areas that staff may need to consider:-

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 the following practices be adopted:-

- (a) Visitors/Guest Speakers:
 - Guest speakers will speak to children within the perimeters of the curriculum concerned
 - Teachers will be present
- (b) Children with specific toileting/intimate care needs:
(Refer to policy)
- (c) Toileting accidents:
(Refer to policy)
- (d) One-to-One teaching
(Occurs at back of classroom)
- (e) Changing for Games/PE/Swimming
(Changing rooms are supervised)
- (f) Recruitment and selection of Staff
- (g) General Conduct
(Refer to Code Discipline)
- (h) Supervision of pupils
(Always supervised during school times hours and activities)
- (i) Internet Use – Acceptable Use Policy – Photos, identifying pupils etc.
(Refer to Policy)
- (j) Photos

While every effort will be made to adhere to best practice as agreed and outlined above, in the event of an emergency where this is not possible or practicable a full record of the incident should be made and reported to the principal and parents.

Links to other Policies/ Planning areas

Prevention: SPHE curriculum
Strand Unit on “Safety and Protection” Programme
The School Code of Discipline

Procedures: Code of Behaviour
Health and Safety Statement

Practice: Swimming Policy
School Tours / Outings
IT – Acceptable Use Policy

Review and Monitoring

This policy will be monitored by the Board of Management on an annual basis and when the need arises.

Staff will be requested on a regular basis to review the school policy in this area and every effort will be made to ensure that the attention of all new staff is drawn to the school child protection policy.

This document is formulated in response to recent changes in Guidance and Procedures in relation to Child Protection matters and takes account of the provisions of each of the following important pieces of legislation:

- Freedom of Information Act 1997
- The Education Act 1998
- The Child Welfare Act 2000
- Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011

The new procedures are based on the recently published *Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011*

References

- ‘Children First’ (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2011)
- ‘Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (Department of Education and Skills 2011)

The Board of Management (BoM) recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and must be reflected in all of the school’s policies, practices and activities. Accordingly, in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills’ Child Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, the BoM of Scoil Mhuire NS, Gortanumera has approved this Child Protection Policy.

The following key personnel have been identified and ratified by the BoM:

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Anne Ryan

The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Mairéad Madden

In its policies, practices and activities, Scoil Mhuire will adhere to the following principles of best practice in Child Protection and Welfare. Our school recognises that the protection and welfare of children is a paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations and will therefore;

- Fully co-operate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters
- Adopt safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect workers from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect
- Develop a practice of openness with parents and encourage parental involvement in the education of their children
- Fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters
- Adhere to the above principles in relation any adult pupil with a special vulnerability

Specific policies named hereunder are key elements of this overall document and must be referred to in the context of this policy:

- Attendance
- Enrolment
- Code of Behaviour
- Bullying
- Health & Safety
- Record Keeping
- ICT
- Supervision
- Special Ed
- Induction of Staff
- Tours/Trips
- Critical Incidents

This policy will also be considered with reference to the participation by pupils in sporting activities, other extra-curricular activities and school outings. Other practices and activities, where child protection might have particular relevance, will consider the procedures outlined within this policy. The Board has ensured that the necessary policies, protocols or practices as appropriate are in place in respect of each of the above listed items.

This policy is available to all school personnel and is readily accessible to parents on request. It is also available in hard copy in each classroom. A copy of this policy is available for the attention of the DES and the patron if requested.

APENDIX 1: Checklist for Annual Review of the Child Protection Policy

The Board of Management must undertake an annual review of its child protection policy and the following checklist shall be used for this purpose.

The checklist is designed as an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. The BoM wish to include other items in the checklist that are of particular relevance to Scoil Mhuire NS and reserves the right to do so if/when the need occurs.

As part of the overall review process, Boards of Management should also assess other school policies, practices and activities vis a vis their adherence to the principles of best practice in child protection and welfare as set out in the school's child protection policy.

	YES/NO
Has the Board formally adopted a child protection policy in accordance with the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	
As part of the school's child protection policy, has the Board formally adopted, without modification, the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	
Are there both a DLP and a Deputy DLP currently appointed?	
Are the relevant contact details (HSE and An Garda Síochána) to hand?	
Has the DLP attended available child protection training?	
Has the Deputy DLP attended available child protection training?	
Have any members of the Board attended child protection training?	
Has the school's child protection policy identified other school policies, practices and activities that are regarded as having particular child protection relevance?	
Has the Board ensured that the Department's "Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools" are available to all school personnel?	
Does the Board have arrangements in place to communicate the school's child protection policy to new school personnel?	
Is the Board satisfied that all school personnel have been made aware of their responsibilities under the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	
Since the Board's last annual review, was the Board informed of any child protection reports made to the HSE/An Garda Síochána by the DLP?	

	YES/NO
Since the Board's last annual review, was the Board informed of any cases where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report to the HSE was made?	
Is the Board satisfied that the child protection procedures in relation to the making of reports to the HSE/ An Garda Síochána were appropriately followed?	
Were child protection matters reported to the Board appropriately recorded in the Board minutes?	
Is the Board satisfied that all records relating to child protection are appropriately filed and stored securely	

Ratification of Policy

This Policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year.
This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on:

Signed _____ Date _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____ Date _____
Principal

Date of next review: _____

The Board further endorses the Principal, Anne Ryan as the school DLP and Mairéad Madden as Deputy DLP.

On behalf of the Board of Management:

Signed: _____ Date _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

APPENDIX A

Child Protection Practices

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

- Physical contact between school personnel and the child should always 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 determining its appropriateness:

- It is acceptable to the child
- It is open and not secretive
- The age and developmental stage of the child

School personnel should avoid doing anything of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.

School personnel should never engage in or allow:

School personnel should never engage in or allow:

- The use of inappropriate language or behaviours
- Physical punishment of any kind
- Sexually provocative games or suggestive comments about or to a child
- The use of sexually explicit or pornographic material

All media products (CDs, DVDs etc. should be checked for their appropriateness with regard to age and suitability.

Visitors/ Guest Speakers

Appropriately appointed and screened visiting teachers of varying disciplines, engaged by the BoM of Scoil Mhuire NS to perform specific duties, will be left work with a class alone at the Principals suitability.

Visitors/Guest speakers should never be left alone with pupils. The school (Principal/ Teachers) has a responsibility to check out the credentials of the visitor/guest speaker and to ensure that the material in use is appropriate.

Children with specific toileting/intimate care needs

- In all situations where a pupil needs assistance with toileting/intimate care, a meeting will be convened, after enrolment and before the child starts school, between parents/guardians, class teacher, special needs assistant, Principal and if appropriate the pupil. 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
- 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 and kept in the child's file

- Two members of staff will be present when dealing with intimate care/toileting needs. Any deviation from the agreed procedure will be recorded and notified to the DLP and the parents/guardians.

Toileting accidents

Clean underwear and suitable clothing will be kept in the school so that if a pupil has an 'accident' of this nature, they will in the first instance be offered fresh clothing into which they can change.

If the pupil for whatever reason cannot clean or change themselves and the parents/guardians cannot be contacted, the child will be assisted by members of staff familiar to the child. In all such situations, two members of staff should be present. A record of all such incidents will be kept and Principal and parents will be notified.

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 Accident Policy as part of Health and Safety.

One-to-one teaching

- It is the policy in this school that one-to-one teaching is often in the best interest of the child
- Every effort will be made to ensure that this teaching takes place in an open environment
- Parents of children who are to be involved in one-to-one teaching will be informed and their agreement sought
- Work being carried out by Special Needs Assistants will be carried out under the direction of the class teacher in an open environment.

Changing for games/ PE / Swimming

Pupils will be expected to dress and undress themselves for Games/ PE/ Swimming. Where assistance is needed this will be done in the communal area and with the consent of parents. Under no circumstances will members of staff/ volunteers be expected to or allowed to dress/undress a child unsupervised in a cubicle/private area. In such situations where privacy is required, the parents/guardians of the child will be asked to assist the child. Scoil Mhuire NS will endeavour to have two male volunteers/member of staff in the male changing area and two female members of staff/volunteers in the female changing area. The BoM of Scoil Mhuire NS has requested that all swimming volunteers must apply to be vetted. In the interim, a Volunteer Form approval by the CPSMA will be in use. At all times there must be adequate supervision of pupils. While every effort will be made to adhere to best practice as agreed and outline above, in the event of an emergency where this is not possible or practicable, a full record of the Incident should be made and reported to the Principal and parents.

Attendance

Our school attendance will be monitored as per our attendance policy. 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.

Behaviour

Children are encouraged at all times to play co-operatively and inappropriate behaviour will be addressed under our 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 to it 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.

Children travelling in staff cars

Members of the school staff will not carry children alone in their cars at any time.

Communication

Every effort will be made to enhance pupil-teacher communication. If pupils have concerns they will be listened to sympathetically. The SPHE/Oral Language/RE programmes allow for open pupil-teacher communication, which is hoped will aid the pupil-teacher relationship. If teachers have to communicate with pupils on a one-to-one basis, they are requested to leave the classroom door open or request a colleague to attend. Further details are found in the school's Communication Policy.

Induction of Staff

The DLP will be responsible for informing all new teachers and ancillary staff of the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures (DES, 2001) and Children First Guidelines (2011), but particularly the recently published Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011). All new teachers are expected to teach the designated SPHE objectives for their class. A member of staff, once trained, will be responsible for the mentoring of new teachers and will be responsible for supporting new teachers as they implement the SPHE objectives.

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, Stay Safe and SPHE. All new parents will be 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 will be given a copy of the school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies.

Internet Safety

It is the intention of the Principal and Staff at Scoil Mhuire NS to ensure that child Protection concerns will be addressed in the school's Acceptable Use Policy as part of its Information and Communication Technology policy. The Stay Safe lessons in each classroom will be supplemented with appropriate resources. There will also be annual meetings during which

parents will be invited to attend a session with an invited speaker to stay abreast of the ever-changing situation regarding internet access.

Record Keeping

Teachers will keep records on each child's reports using Scoil Mhuire NS Record Keeping Sheets. These records are kept in the drawer of each teacher's desk. 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 office. Further details on record keeping will be found in the school's Record Keeping Policy.

Supervision

The school's Supervision Policy will be followed by all staff to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children at all breaks. A rota will be displayed to cover 11 o'clock and lunchtime breaks. See Supervision Policy for agreed rules around break times and procedures around teacher absences.

Visibility

Teachers will ensure that children are visible in the school playground. Children 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 playground or to engage with adults who are outside of the school playground.

Appendix C

In recent years, as a society, we have become very aware of the problem of child abuse through neglect, emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

Each one of us has a duty to protect children and *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children* noted that teachers, who are the main care givers to children outside the family, are particularly well placed to observe and monitor children for signs of abuse.

In response to this, the Department of Education and Skills published *Child Protection Procedures for all schools* in relation to child protection and welfare. These guidelines promote the safety and welfare of all children and are to be welcomed.

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire N.S. has adopted these guidelines as school policy. Consequently, if school staff suspect or are alerted to possible child abuse they are obliged to refer this matter to the Health Service Executive (HSE). The HSE will then assess the situation and provide support for the child concerned.

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children may be accessed on the website of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (www.dcyf.ie) and the Department of Education and Skills *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* can be read on the Department's website (www.education.ie). Parents/Guardians are also welcome to look through the procedures and Child Protection Policy here at the school.

Yours sincerely,

Anne Ryan
Principal