

# Scoil Mhuire Maigh Cuilinn Moycullen Central School



## Polasaí Cosanta Leanaí Child Protection Policy

2015

## **Introduction**

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire recognises the importance of child protection and welfare regarding all aspects of school life and that such considerations must necessarily be reflected in all of the school's policies, practices and activities.

In compliance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills' Child Protection Procedures for Primary Schools, the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire has ratified the following child protection policy, which complies fully with **Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children**.

The Board of Management will implement fully the Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools as part of this overall child protection policy.

The Board of Management will undertake an annual review of its Child Protection Policy and its implementation by the school.

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Mr. Seán Óg O'Flaherty  
The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Ms. Louise McKiernan

At each Board of Management meeting the principal's report shall state the number of reports made to the HSE by the DLP, since the last board of management meeting. The principal's report shall state only the number and not include any other details. The principal's report shall also state the number of cases, since the last board meeting, where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result referrals were made.

In its policies, practices and activities, Scoil Mhuire will adhere to the following principles of best practice in child protection and welfare in:

- Recognising that the protection and welfare of children is of primary importance and takes precedence over of all other considerations.
- Fully co-operating with the relevant authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters.
- Adopting safe practices to minimise the possibility of injury or harm to children and will also seek to protect all staff members from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave themselves vulnerable to accusations of abuse or neglect.
- Using the standard template child protection policy which is in Appendix 1 of the DES Child Protection Procedures.
- Observing strict confidentiality in dealing with child protection matters.
- Fully implementing the Stay Safe programme, which is mandatory and the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme, which is mandatory.
- Displaying the name of the DLP in a prominent position near the main entrance to the school
- Making the policy available to all school personnel, the parents' association and parents via the school website and on request, and to the Dept. of Education and Skills and the Patron if required.

## **Policy Documents of Scoil Mhuire relating to Child Protection**

| <b>Policy</b>               | <b>Status</b> |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Enrolment                   | Current       |
| Anti-Bullying Policy        | Current       |
| ICT Policy                  | Current       |
| Policy re. Photographs      | Current       |
| Mobile Phone Policy         | Pending       |
| Anti-Bullying Policy        | Current       |
| SPHE Policy                 | Current       |
| Policy on Outings and Tours | Pending       |
| Policy on Supervision       | Pending       |
| Intimate Care Policy        | Pending       |

### **Definition of Child Abuse**

Child Abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse.

**Neglect** can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, medical care. Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific moment. Staff must inform the DLP if he/she is concerned or suspicious that a child is being neglected.

**Emotional Abuse** occurs when a child's need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Emotional abuse can be manifested in terms of the child's behavioural, cognitive, affective or physical functioning. A child may be affected by an event in his/her life and staff must inform the DLP if he/she is concerned or suspicious that a child's emotional needs are being neglected.

**Physical Abuse** is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child. Staff must inform the DLP if he/she is concerned or suspicious that a child may have been physically abused.

**Sexual Abuse** occurs when a child is used by another person for his/her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others. Staff must inform the DLP if he/she is concerned or suspicious that a child may have been sexually abused.

### **Recognising Child Abuse**

There are usually three stages in the identification of child abuse:

1. Considering the possibility
2. Looking out for signs of abuse
3. Recording of information

Signs of child abuse might involve the disclosure of abuse by a child or young person or include:

**Sexual**

- age-inappropriate or abnormal sexual play or knowledge

**Physical**

- specific injuries or patterns of injuries

**Emotional**

- evidence of self-harm
- poor self esteem

**Neglect**

- having no lunch or inadequate lunch
- lack a school of uniform
- homework rarely done or not at all
- poor attendance at school
- poor punctuality
- persistent health problems
- frequent tiredness due lack of sleep
- inappropriate viewing late at night

**The Role of the Designated Liaison Person**

The Board of Management has appointed Mr. Sean Óg O’Flaherty as Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Ms. Louise McKiernan as the deputy DLP.

The role of the DLP is to liaise with all relevant agencies, whether in seeking advice, reporting or in follow up consultations.

The DLP has specific responsibility for child protection and will represent the school in all correspondence with the HSE, An Garda Síochána and other parties in connection with allegations of abuse. All matters pertaining to the processing or investigation of child abuse should be processed through the DLP (DES Procedures 3:2).

The DLP acts in cases where there are reasonable grounds for suspicion or where an allegation has been made.

If informed by a member of the school community of a concern the DLP should in the first instance seek advice by phone, from a senior child care officer/social worker/manager/designated person employed by the HSE. At this early stage all parties including the DLP may remain anonymous and there is no requirement on the DLP to disclose the names of any party including the name of the school or her own name. However, the DLP should note the name of any HSE employee who gives advice.

It is incumbent on the DLP to follow through on all advice from the HSE. Written records should be kept of all phone calls and meetings.

**Confidentiality**

All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse should only be shared on a *need to know* basis in the interests of the child. The giving of information to those who need to have that information is not a breach of confidentiality.

This procedure exists for the protection of a child who may have been or has been abused. The DLP who is submitting a report to the HSE or An Garda Síochána should inform a parent/guardian, unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or place that child at further risk. A decision not to inform a parent/guardian should be briefly recorded together with the reasons for not doing so.

In emergency situations, where the HSE cannot be contacted, and the child appears to be at immediate and serious risk, An Garda Síochána should be contacted immediately. A child should not be left in a dangerous situation pending HSE intervention.

### **Basis for Reporting to the HSE**

The HSE should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse. With regard to emotional abuse and/or physical neglect, consistent indication, over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional neglect or physical neglect would constitute reasonable grounds for concern.

The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith to designated officers of the HSE or any member of an Garda Síochána (DES Procedures 1:10)

### **Procedures in Dealing with a Disclosure/Suspicion from a Child or Third Party**

Teachers who suspect child abuse/neglect should report their concerns to the DLP at the first instance and carefully record their observations over a period of time.

Disclosures of Child Abuse/neglect from a third party will be reported to the DLP.

If a third party starts to tell a teacher about an alleged child abuse incident the teacher will ask them to speak to the DLP. If the person does not inform the DLP the teacher will do so. Where a child discloses alleged abuse/neglect to a staff member, the person receiving that information should listen carefully and supportively.

**IT IS NOT THE ROLE OF ANY STAFF MEMBER OR DLP TO INVESTIGATE AN INCIDENT/ALLEGATION/SUSPICION. HIS/HER ROLE IS TO LISTEN AND RECORD INFORMATION.**

Great care must be taken not to abuse the child's trust. This should not be a formal interview.

- Listen to the child
- Do not ask leading questions or make suggestions to the child
- Offer reassurance but do not make promises
- Do not stop a child recalling significant events
- Do not over-react
- Confidentiality should be assured – explain that further help may have to be sought.
- Record the discussion accurately noting:
  - What, where and when?
  - Descriptions and possible sketches of physical injuries
  - Explanations of injuries using direct quotations if appropriate
- Sign and date the record
- Retain the record securely

Whether cases of abuse/neglect are suspected or confirmed, confidentiality will be respected. The information on individual cases will be restricted to the teacher(s) immediately involved with the child and will be on a *need to know* basis.

The DLP will record the incident. It is not the function of the teacher or the DLP to investigate the issue. 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.

The Chairperson of the Board of Managements will be informed of the disclosure. Informal contact with the designated person in the HSE will be made, seeking advice as to whether a referral should be made. The DLP will be explicit that he or she is requesting advice and not making a report. It is not necessary at this stage for the DLP to disclose his/her name or the name of the school.

The advice given by the HSE must be acted upon. If the advice is not to refer, the DLP will record this advice as the reason for non-referral. The chairperson of the Board of Management will be informed. If the advice from the HSE is to refer the case, the DLP will do so. However, prior to referring, the DLP will inform the parent of her intention to refer, unless this course of action is injurious to the child.

Following referral and the completion of the standard form, the school will have no further part to play in the investigation. If a case conference is required, the DLP will be invited to attend.

All records will be held in a central, securely locked location.

### **Allegations Against an Employee**

Procedures followed are similar to those of a disclosure.

- Employee is made aware of the allegation against him/her.
- Employee will be given the opportunity to respond to the allegation in writing and at a meeting of the Board of Management.
- BOM meeting to review the allegation, giving due consideration to any advice given by HSE and Gardaí.
- The BOM will consider placing the employee on administrative leave, with full pay, pending the outcome of investigations by the HSE and Gardaí.
- On conclusion of any investigation the BOM will then determine the employment status of the employee.

## **Child Protection Measures in Scoil Mhuire**

### **Employment of Staff in Scoil Mhuire**

All staff employed from September 2015 will not be allowed work with the children until they are vetted by the Gardaí. The Teaching Council arrange teacher vetting for newly qualified teachers. Staff will be asked for copies of their vetting forms and these will be kept on file in the principal's office.

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

The DLP will be responsible for informing all new teachers and ancillary staff of this policy and the Children First Guidelines (1999).

### **Dealing with children on a one-to-one basis**

If a staff member/visiting professional such as an Educational Psychologist has to work/ with children on a one-to-one basis, they are requested to leave the door of the room in which they are working ajar if there is not a glass partition fitted on the door. In some circumstances 'One to One Teaching' is recommended in the best interest of the student.

Every effort will be made by the Board of Management to ensure that such teaching takes place in an 'open' environment. Parents/guardians of students recommended for 'one to one teaching' will be informed and their consent sought. Special Needs Assistants will work under the direction of classroom/resource teachers in the mainstream rooms where the students are assigned. Staff members are advised to sit opposite rather than beside the student in one to one teaching situations.

### **Visitors/Guests**

Visitors to the school or guests of the school, be they guest speakers, individuals on work experience, maintenance personnel or sports coaches should not be left alone with students. The school has a responsibility to check out the credentials of all visitors/guest speakers and to ensure that the material they are sharing with the students is age appropriate.

### **Supervision at Break-Time and Lunch-Time**

School Supervision Policy and routines will be followed by all staff to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children at all breaks. Teachers will ensure that children are visible in the school yard at all times.

Children will not be allowed to spend time in classrooms, toilets or the Halla Mór where they would not be under adult supervision. They are not to leave the school yard or to engage with adults who are outside of the school yard without the permission and supervision of the teacher on duty.

Should it be necessary for children to remain in classrooms during break-times, they must be adequately supervised as per the School Supervision Policy.

### **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.

### **Behaviour**

Children are to be 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.

### **Attendance**

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.

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

Lone teachers will not carry children in their cars. The ratio of children to teachers in cars must be at least 2 to 1. A single child may be carried in a car by a teacher, providing another adult is present.

### **Swimming**

Children will travel by bus to the swimming pool under the teacher's direction. Teachers will ensure that children are safely seated and wearing seat belts before departing. Teachers should take care to count the children on the bus to be certain that all children have been accounted for before departing the school. Teachers will supervise the children as they are boarding and alighting the bus. Children will dress themselves for swimming in cubicles in the dressing room. Teachers and parent helpers will circulate within the dressing room but will not enter the cubicles while occupied by children. All adults assisting with supervision in the changing rooms will act in 'loco parentis' and will be briefed around our swimming procedures. Teachers should take care to count the children on the bus to be certain that all children have been accounted for before departing the pool.

### **Changing for Games/PE/Swimming/Activities**

Students will be expected to undress and dress for these activities without the assistance of a staff member. Where assistance is required, it will take place in communal areas and with the consent of parents/guardians. Under no circumstances will a staff member or volunteer be expected or allowed to dress/undress a student in a cubicle/private area. Staff should not be left on their own with a child in this circumstance. In such situations where privacy is requested, parents/guardians will be consulted and asked to provide such assistance [if necessary]

### **Visitors**

Teachers on yard duty will be aware of visitors entering the school yard and will ascertain their intentions. They will be supervised in the discharge of their business. Visitors will enter the school via the front door of the school, passing by the office. Visitors to the school will have to ring the buzzer and speak to the school secretary or principal, giving their reason for calling before being admitted. All other entrance/exit doors of the main school building will be magnetically locked after the children enter the school.

### **Toileting**

Adults working with children with intimate care needs will always make sure that any physical contact is for the purpose of meeting the needs of the child. Adults will always respect the dignity of the child. Clean underwear and replacement clothing [school tracksuits/uniforms] will be kept at the school. Where a toileting accident occurs, the student(s) will be offered a replacement tracksuit and clean underwear. In circumstances where a student is unable to 'clean' and/or 'change' themselves, the school will contact his/her parent/guardian. In the event that contact cannot be made with a parent/guardian, two members of staff familiar with the student will facilitate. A written record of all such incidents will be maintained on the student's file. Please see intimate care policy for details.

### **Children with Intimate Care Needs**

In circumstances where a student of the school requires assistance with toileting or has intimate care needs, a meeting will be convened with the parents/guardians of this student. The purpose of this meeting will be to ascertain the 'specific' needs of the student and how the school will meet such needs. The staff involved in the provision of such care will be identified and procedures agreed [in writing] for effecting same. It is best practice that two members of staff are present to assist students with toileting/intimate care needs. Any deviation from agreed procedure will be recorded and



notified to the DLP and the Parents/Guardians. Cognisance will be taken of the age, gender and developmental stage of the student when devising a plan to address such needs.

### **DVDs**

Staff will always ensure that any DVD shown to the children is age appropriate. Scoil Mhuire is a primary school and as such the following are the only DVDs that should be shown to children:

General Viewing (G)

Parental Guidance (PG)

12 A (for children who are twelve years old with adult supervision)

No DVDs rated as suitable for 15 year olds, 18 year olds or adults will be shown to the children.

### **Physical Contact**

Physical contact between staff of the school and students should be in response to the needs of the student and not the needs of the staff member. While 'physical contact' may be used to comfort, reassure or assist a student, cognisance should be taken of the following factors in determining

- (i) Is it acceptable to the child?
- (ii) Is it open and not secretive?
- (iii) The age and developmental stage of the child.

It is strongly advised that staff should avoid doing anything of a personal nature for students that they can do for themselves.

### **Groups using School Building Outside of School hours for Activities involving Children**

Groups using the school premises for 'after-school' activities involving children will be advised of and given a copy of this policy. They will be requested to acknowledge receipt of same [in writing]. Should any complaint pertaining to child abuse, be made against any of these groups, the procedures outlined within this policy document will be adhered to. It will be a matter for the Board of Management to review the contract between the school and the group [subject of the allegation] regarding continued use of premises.

### **School Outings, Tours and Activities (see Policy on Outings and Tours *pending*)**

Scoil Mhuire will engage independent contractors to provide transport for all outings. Supervision will be provided for students attending such activities.

Teachers will be extra vigilant when taking children out of the school. Special attention will be paid to road safety, behaviour on bus and risks posed by particular venues.

Teachers will ensure that Parents are given sufficient notice of the itinerary and timetable, cost and items/clothing/food and drink required.

SNA's will accompany children with special needs on school tours. Two adults, one of whom is a teacher must accompany every school tour or outing. Parents, at the discretion of the class teacher, may be invited to assist with supervision on school trips. If the teacher in question is a male, a female parent should accompany him to cater the needs of the girls. Parents may be asked to supervise a small group of children for a specified time while visiting an exhibition where a large group would get little value from the experience.

Teachers on whole school trips i.e. football matches are required to identify the pupils that they are supervising. Teachers should take care to count the children on the bus to be certain that all children have been accounted for before departing.

The teacher brings a list of children's names and relevant phone numbers and a first aid kit. The school mobile phone policy is applicable to the children while on a school tour. Mobile phones may not be used by the pupils while on a school tour.

**Internet/ Mobile Phone Use (see ICT Policy) (see Policy on Photographs)**

Every effort will be made by staff to ensure that access to and use of ICT equipment within school will be for age appropriate educational use. Permission will be sought from parents/guardians regarding the use of student photographs on the internet as per the school's Policy on Photographs. It is the policy of Scoil Mhuire that children are, under no circumstances, allowed to bring with them to school a mobile phone or any device that is capable of taking photographs and/or that may connect to the internet, regardless of whether such a device is powered off and kept in a schoolbag or coat pocket.

Every effort will be made by staff members to adhere to best practice. In the event of an emergency, where this may not be possible or practicable, a written record of the incident will be maintained at the school office detailing the procedures followed. The DLP and parents/guardians will be informed accordingly.

**Ratification of Policy**

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2015

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

Chairperson of Board of Management

Principal

Date:

Date:

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management as required.

### **Checklist for Annual Review of the Child Protection Policy**

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire must undertake an annual review of its Child Protection Policy and the following checklist shall be used for this purpose.

- 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 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?
- 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?
- Has the Board ensured that the pupils’ parents have been provided with the school’s Child Protection Policy?