

Scoil San Nioclás

Child Protection Policy

Introductory Statement

As educators, we are obliged to provide pupils with the highest possible standard of care in order to promote their wellbeing and protect them from harm. The Child Protection Procedures for Schools apply to all recognised primary and post-primary schools and to all members of school personnel.

Rationale

To address this topic in the interest of child welfare.

Policies already in school which are linked to Child Protection

1. School Policy on Bullying
2. Code of Discipline
3. Health and Safety Policy
4. Social Media Usage Policy

Aims

- To promote the general welfare, health development and safety of children
- To adopt a safe and clearly defined method of recruiting and defined method of recruiting and selecting staff and volunteers.
- To raise awareness within the school of potential risks to children's safety and welfare.
- To develop procedures which would provide guidance to staff and volunteers who may have reasonable grounds for concern about the safety and welfare of children within the school,
- To identify a designated person to act as a liaison with outside agencies and as a resource person to the staff member or volunteer who has raised concerns about child protection.

What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is complicated and can take different forms, but usually consists of one or more of the following:

- ☐ **Neglect**
- ☐ **Emotional Abuse**
- ☐ **Physical abuse**
- ☐ **Sexual abuse**

All staff should familiarise themselves with signs and symptoms of abuse as listed in the book "Children First", pages 125 — 131.

What would constitute reasonable grounds for concern?

- Specific indication that the child was abused
- An account by a person who saw the child being abused
- Evidence, such as an injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse
- If there is a pattern of so-called injuries, and implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour.
- Consistent indication over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

Designated Liaison Person

The present Designated Liaison Person is the Principal and if unavailable, the Deputy Principal.

Role of the D.L.P

- Distribution of information and *Children First* booklets to staff.
- Consult and report, if necessary.
- Follow-up after a staff member reports a disclosure or concern.
- Record keeping.
- Informing new or temporary staff of procedures.

Procedures to be followed:

We adopt the procedures as recommended in the D.E. 'Procedures and Guidelines' and also 'Child First' when managing the following:

1. A disclosure by a pupil

- Listen to the child
- Do not ask leading questions nor make suggestions to the child.
- Offer reassurance, but do not make promises.
- Do not stop a child recalling significant events.
- Do not overreact.
- Explain that further help may have to be sought.
- Record the discussion accurately and retain the record.

2. Reported Concerns

- If a staff member receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a pupil is being abused, he/she should report the matter to the D.L.P. in the school.
- If the staff member and the D.L.P. are satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation, the D.L.P. should report the matter to Tusla immediately.
- A report to Tusla should be made by the D.L.P. in person by phone or in writing.
- When reporting a concern to Tusla, the Tusla portal should be used wherever possible. After the report has been submitted via the Tusla portal, a copy of the report must be printed and retained in accordance with the requirements of the procedures.
- In the event of an emergency or in the non-availability of Tusla staff, a report may be made to the Gardaí.
- When such a report is being made to Tusla, the chairperson of the Board of Management should be informed.

Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse by School Employees

When an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee, the Designated Liaison Person or their Deputy should immediately act in accordance with the procedures already listed in this document.

Role of the Board of Management

Child Protection Oversight Report

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023) (hereinafter referred to as the procedures) set out specific oversight requirements that apply to all school Boards of Management, including in relation to the provision by the school Principal of a Child Protection Oversight Report (CPOR) at every Board of Management meeting.

A face to face meeting of the Board must be held at least once in every school term in order for the CPOR, along with required supporting documentation, to be provided to the Board and for the Board to resume and continue to carry out its important oversight role in respect of the reporting of child protection concerns in accordance with the procedures. A Board meeting for these purposes is considered essential work. The following shall apply to such a meeting –

- the face to face meeting may be convened to deal solely with the CPOR report
- a quorum must be physically present at the face to face meeting
- no members are permitted to join remotely
- the relevant requirements of the procedures must be adhered to in full in respect of the CPOR, including those in relation to the provision and recovery of documents at the meeting
- the CPOR report submitted shall set out under each of the required headings the number of cases arising since the last CPOR report was provided to the board

The CPOR report shall not be provided at any Board meeting that is held remotely **except in circumstances where**, since the last CPOR was provided to the board, there have been no cases arising under **each** of the headings set out in sections 9.5 to 9.7 inclusive of the procedures. This is the only exception to the general rule prohibiting the provision of the CPOR at remote meetings.

Action taken by the Chairperson

When a Chairperson of a Board of Management becomes aware of an allegation of abuse against a school employee, the chairperson should privately inform the employee of the following:

- The fact that the allegation has been made against them;
- The nature of the allegation;
- Whether or not the matter has been reported to the appropriate authority

The employee should be given a copy of the written allegation and any other relevant documentation. The employee should be requested to respond to the allegation in writing to the Board of Management within a specific period of time. The employee should be told that their explanation to the Board of Management would also have to be passed on to the relevant authority.

At this stage, it should be remembered that the first priority should be to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk. The Chairperson of the Board of Management should as a matter of urgency take any necessary protective measures. These measures should be proportionate to the level of risk and should not unreasonably penalise the employee, financially or otherwise, unless necessary to protect children.

If, in the Chairperson's opinion, the nature of the allegation warrants immediate action, the Chairperson, on behalf of the Board of Management should direct that the employee absent themselves from the school with immediate effect. Where the Chairperson is unsure as to whether the nature of the allegations warrants the absence of the employee from the school while the matter is being investigated they should consult with the Childcare Manager HSE and /or Gardaí for advice as to the action that those authorities would consider necessary. Following those consultations, the Chairperson should have due regard for the advice offered.

Any absence by a school employee would be regarded as administrative leave of absence with pay and not a suspension. Such a leave of absence would not imply any degree of guilt on the part of the School employee. Where such a leave of absence is invoked, the Department of Education should be contacted with regard to:

- Formal approval for the paid leave of absence of the school employee;
- Departmental sanction for the employment of a substitute teacher. Should further follow-up be required the Chairperson and Board of Management will adhere to the guidelines outlined in the Department of Education "Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures" Chapter 4, 4.4 — 4.5.1.

Organisational Implications

- The Board of Management ensures in so far as possible the safety of pupils through cooperation with D.L.P, TUSLA and all other relevant authorities
- The Chairperson of the Board of Management is informed by the D.L.P of all reports to TUSLA.
- **Supervision:** Adequate supervision and visibility in corridors, rooms and yard is in place.
- **Attendance:** Records of attendance are kept and notes to explain absences from school are required.
- **Record Keeping:** The school Record Keeping Policy is in line with Child Protection.
- **Pupils Travelling in Staff Cars:** In general, staff members should not allow pupils to travel in their cars.
- **Induction of New/Temporary Staff:** The Principal or D.L.P will inform new staff of the role of staff members with regard to Child Protection.
- **Special Needs:** When children with special needs enrol in the school special care is taken to ensure their safety.

Positive Handling

While dealing with challenging behaviour is of specific interest to staff working in Sonas (ASD class), it is also relevant to all staff because of mainstream integration, staff rotation and playground supervision. The positive handling practice in use in our school was formulated in consultation with parents / guardians of children in the ASD class. This practice is divided into the following four categories:

Reassurance/ Comfort	Intimate care / Safety / First Aid	Non-Contact Restrictions / Containment	Use of Force
• Pat on the arm for praise/ attention • Holding the hand of an upset child • High fives / hugs	• Cleaning cuts • Lifting a child from a height • Toileting • Dressing (Swimming pool)	• Securing seat belts on transport • Securing harness on chair • Access locks on external doors	• Disengaging from a grab / hair pull • Breaking up a fight • Escorting to another location • Restraint / Withdrawal

Curricular Implications

In our school we use the 'Stay Safe' programme under the strand unit of Safety and Protection.

Child Protection Meetings or Case Conferences

The Child Protection Conference is an essential mechanism for the HSE in the effective operation of the child protection services under the Child Care Act, 1991. The Child Protection Conference plays a pivotal role in making recommendations and planning for the welfare of children who may be at serious risk.

A request from the HSE for a school employee to attend a Child Protection Conference should be made to the Designated Liaison Person who should consult with the Chairperson of the Board of Management. It would be normal for a person attending a Child Protection Conference to provide a report to the conference. Professionals should always be informed when children and/or parents or guardians are going to be present at Child Protection Conferences. The recommendations of the Child Protection Conference are concerned with the future planning for the child and family. The school employee may, be requested to keep the child's behaviour under closer observation, in a manner that is not inconsistent with the school employee's existing duties to their class as a whole. In all cases, individuals who refer or discuss their concerns about the care

and protection of children with HSE staff should be informed of the likely steps to be taken by the professionals involved.

Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

The school will monitor, review and evaluate this policy on an on-going basis to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practice. This on-going review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, legislation and developments in school-based programmes and feedback from parents/guardians, teachers and pupils.

This policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of school planning.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Scoil San Nioclás on 25th September, 2024

Signed: Kathleen Moran

Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 25/9/2024

Signed Margaret Lowry

Principal

Date: 25/9/2024

Date of next review: September, 2025

Glossary of Terms

- **Child Safeguarding** – ensuring safe practice and appropriate responses by workers and volunteers to concerns about the safety or welfare of children, including online concerns, should these arise. Child safeguarding is about protecting the child from harm, promoting their welfare and in doing so creating an environment which enables children and young people to grow, develop and achieve their full potential.
- **Guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures** – the procedures an organisation has in place to safeguard children from harm and reduce the risks to children of being harmed.
- **Child Safeguarding Statement** – defined in the Children First Act 2015, this is a statement which includes a written assessment of risk of harm to children while availing of the service, and the measures that will be taken to manage any identified risks.
- **Child or young person** – a person under the age of 18 years, who is not or has not been married.
- **Child Protection and Welfare Report Form** – form for reporting suspected or alleged abuse or welfare concerns to Tusla (available on the Tusla website, [here](#)).
- **Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children** – national, overarching guidance for the protection and welfare of children, published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The current version was published in 2017.
- **Designated Liaison Person (DLP)** – a resource to any staff member who has a child protection concern. DLPs are responsible for ensuring that reporting procedures are followed correctly and promptly and act as a liaison person with other agencies (see Children First: National Guidance).
- **Mandated person** – as defined in the Children First Act 2015, mandated persons have a statutory obligation to report concerns which meet or exceed the threshold of harm, as defined in the Act, to Tusla and to cooperate with Tusla in the assessment of mandated reports, where requested to do so. **Named person** – a person appointed by an organisation to lead the development of guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures and for ensuring that policies and procedures are consistent with best practice as detailed in this Guide.
- **Relevant Person** – means a person who is appointed by the school to be the first point of contact in respect of the Child Safeguarding Statement and is normally the D.L.P.
- **Tusla** – Tusla is Ireland's Child and Family Agency, the lead, statutory organisation for safeguarding children in Ireland.
- **Tusla Web Portal** – A web portal has been developed to allow professionals to securely submit Child Protection and Welfare Report Forms and Retrospective Abuse Report Forms to Tusla. It can be accessed from the Tusla website, [here](#).

concerns about the care and protection of children with HSE staff should be informed of the likely steps to be taken by the professionals involved.

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This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Scoil San Nioclás on 25th September, 2024

Signed: Kathleen Moran

Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 2/10/2025

Date of next review: September, 2026

Signed Ashley Lonsigan

Principal

Date: 2/10/2025