

 **TIMAHOE NS, TIMAHOE, CO. LAOIS**

 **057 8627051**

**Child protection policy**

This document is a response to recent changes in legislation and takes account of the provisions of the following 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, and Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Dept. of Education & Skills, 2011).**

**References**

Children First (Dept. of Children and Youth Affairs 2011)

Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (Dept. of Education & Skills, 2011).

The Board of Management recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and must be reflected in all of the schools policies, practices and activities.

Therefore, in accordance with requirements of the Department of Education and Skills, Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire Fatima has agreed the following child protection policy.

The Board of Management has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the Department’s Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools as part of this overall child protection policy.

**The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Ann Bergin (Principal).**

**The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Martina Mulhall (Vice Principal).**

In its policies, practices and activities, Scoil Mhuire Fatima, Timahoe will adhere to the following principles of best practice in child protection and welfare. The school will recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations:

We will:

* 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.

Certain policies such as our Code of Behaviour, Anti-Bullying Policy and Supervision of Pupils Policy will take particular account of this Child Protection Policy. 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 take due consideration of the procedures outlines 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.

The policy has been made available to school personnel and is readily accessible to parents on request. A copy of this policy will be made available to the DES and the patron if requested.

**Designated Liaison Person (DLP)**

The DLP in Scoil Mhuire Fatima is the Principal Ann Bergin; this appointment has been ratified by the Board of Management. The Deputy DLP is Martina Mulhall; this appointment has also been ratified by the Board of Management. Both members of staff have undertaken training from the Child Abuse Protection Programme (CAPP). CAPP provides training to the whole school community (staff, parents and Boards of Management) on the Stay Safe Programme.

The DLP has specific responsibility for child protection and will represent the school in all correspondence with the HSE, An Garda Siochána 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 and allegation has been made.

**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 Siochána should inform a parent or guardian, unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or place the child at further risk. A decision to inform a parent or 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 Siochána should be contacted immediately. A child should not be left in a dangerous situation pending HSE intervention.

Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse

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 Siochána (DES Procedures 1:10).

**Qualified Privilege**

People making a report to the DLP in good faith have ‘qualified privilege’ under common law. Reports made to the HSE may be subject to provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, 1997. This act enables members of the public to obtain access to personal information relating to them which is in the possession of public bodies. However, the act also provides that public bodies may refuse access to information obtained by them in confidence (DES Procedures 1:11)

**Definition and Recognition of Child Abuse**

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types:

* Neglect
* Emotional abuse
* Physical abuse
* Sexual abuse

Each of these categories is defined in full in *Children First* but for the purpose of this policy attention is drawn to the stated definition of ‘neglect’.

**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.

**Guidelines for Recognition of Child Abuse**

A list of child abuse indicators is contained in *Children First*, Chapter 2. This policy draws particular attention to ‘persistent evidence’ of neglect, including indicators such as:

* No lunch
* Lack of uniform
* No homework
* Poor attendance
* Persistent health problems
* Lack of sleep

Inappropriate television viewing late at night and other evidence that would indicate lack of supervision in the home. All signs and symptoms must be examined in the total context of the child’s situation and family circumstances.

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

* Considering the possibility
* Looking out for signs of abuse
* Recording of information

Each of these stages is developed in *Children First 2:2*

**Handling Disclosures from Children**

DES Procedures 3:5 gives comprehensive details of how disclosures should be approached. Staff are advised to deal with each situation sensitively, reassure the child but not to make promises that cannot be fulfilled.

The adult should not ask leading questions or make suggestions. They should explain that further help may have to be sought. The discussion should then be recorded accurately. The record should include reference to what was observed with sketches of physical injury where necessary. It should also record when the alleged incident took place. Records should be kept in a secure place. The information should then be conveyed to the school DLP.

If the reporting person and the DLP are satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion/allegation, the procedures outlined in *Children First* must be adhered to. Standardised reporting forms should be used (DES Procedures, Appendix 4). The content of the report should follow the guidance in Children First.

Allegations or Suspicions in relation to School Employees (DES Procedures, Chapter 5)

The Chairperson and the DLP are primarily concerned with the protection of the children in their care. However, employees must be protected against false and malicious claims.

Legal advice should be sought by the board in relation to the employee. If the allegation is against the DLP, the Chairperson of the BOM will assume the responsibility for reporting the matter to the HSE.

**Reporting**

**(See Appendix 4)**

When an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee, the DLP should act in accordance with the procedures outlined in Children First. A written statement of the allegation should be sought on behalf of a child. The DLP should always inform the Chairperson of the BOM and is responsible for liaising with the HSE. The Chairperson assumes responsibility for communicating with the employee.

School employees, other than the DLP, who receive allegations against another school employee, should immediately report the matter to the DLP. School employees who form suspicions regarding conduct of another school employee should consult the DLP.

The employee should be informed by the Employer;

1. That an allegation has been made against him/her.
2. The nature of the allegations.
3. Whether or not the HSE or Gardaí has been informed.

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 BoM within a specified period and told that this may be passed to the Gardaí, HSE and legal advisers.

The Chairperson must take the necessary steps to protect the child and may consult the BoM in this matter. The BoM may direct that the employee take administrative leave with pay and avoid suspension, thus removing any implication of guilt. The DES should be immediately informed.

**School Measures Taken to Protect the Children in Our Care**

Here at Scoil Mhuire Fatima the Protection and Safety of our students is paramount among anything else. We take all action within our means to ensure that their safety is never compromised, in relation to this certain points should be noted;

1. Scoil Mhuire Fatima fully implement the Stay Safe programme as part of their weekly curriculum.
2. A copy of the schools’ Child Protection Policy, which includes the names of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) AND Deputy DLP, will be made available to all school personnel and is readily available to parents.
3. The name of the DLP and other relevant support services are displayed in a prominent position near the main entrance to the school.
4. In addition to informing the school authority of those cases where a report involving a child in the school has been submitted to the HSE, the DLP shall also inform the school authority of cases where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report was made. At each meeting of the Board of Management, the agenda includes an item on Child Protection; the Principal shall inform the Board of the number of all such cases and this shall recorded in the minutes of the board meeting.
5. Scoil Mhuire Fatima will undertake an annual review of its Child Protection Policy and Its implementation by the school. A checklist, to be used in the undertaking of a review (See Appendix 1). The school has put in place an action plan to address any areas of improvement which might be identified in the annual review.
6. The school ensures that there will be two adults in attendance at all times of any swimming classes that may commence during the school year. The dressing rooms and pool area will also be well supervised.
7. Staff should not be alone in a classroom with one child or detain a child on their own after school hours. Pupils with special educational needs are sanctioned resource hours and assistance on an individual basis; staff are mindful of this Child Protection policy when teaching these pupils and our support rooms have glass windows in the doors, rendering the occupants visible at all times.
8. Children with physical disabilities who may require assistance in toiletry matters will be aided by a Special Needs Assistant (if allocated by NCSE) who has met the necessary screening requirements when being employed by the school (See Appendix 2).It should be noted that children with disabilities may become more at risk of abuse due to a number of reasons (DES procedures 2:3). Parents, teachers and all staff involved in services for children with disabilities need to be familiar with the indicators of abuse and to be alert for signs of abuse.
9. Students leaving the premises during school hours due to illness or for an appointment must be signed out at reception by a parent or a previously specified guardian.
10. To further protect our students Scoil Mhuire Fatima has in place a buzzer system at reception. A person cannot enter the premises unless they make themselves known by pressing the buzzer and alerting the secretary or person in place at reception.
11. Outside contractors must also make themselves known at reception, sign in when they enter the building and sign out on their departure.
12. There is also a barrier in place at reception warning visitors to wait for assistance at reception before entering into the main areas of the school.

**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 Dec 20th 2013

**John Delaney Ann Bergin Martina Mulhall**

**John Delaney Ann Bergin Martina Mulhall**

**Chairman BoM Principal Deputy Principal**

**Appendix 1**

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 it’s not intended as an exhaustive list. The Board of Management may wish to include other items in the checklist that are of particular relevance to our school and reserves the right to do so if/when the need occurs.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. | 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 |
| 2. | Has the Board formally adopted a child protection policy in accordance with the ‘Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools’?  |  |  |
| 3. | 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’?  |  |  |
| 4. | Are there both a DLP and a Deputy DLP currently appointed? |  |  |
| 5. | Are the relevant contact details (HSE and An Garda Síochána) to hand? |  |  |
| 6. | Has the DLP attended available child protection training? |  |  |
| 7. | Has the Deputy DLP attended available child protection training? |  |  |
| 8. | Have any members of the Board attended child protection training? |  |  |
| 9. | Has the school’s child protection policy identified other school policies, practices and activities that are regarded as having particular child protection relevance?  |  |  |
| 10. | Has the Board ensured that the Department’s Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools are available to all school personnel?  |  |  |
| 11. | Does the Board have arrangements in place to communicate the school’s child protection policy to new school personnel?  |  |  |
| 12. | 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?  |  |  |
| 13. | 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?  |  |  |
| 14. | 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?  |  |  |
| 15. | 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? |  |  |
| 16. | Were child protection matters reported to the Board appropriately recorded in the Board minutes?  |  |  |
| 17 | Is the Board satisfied that all records relating to child protection are appropriately filed and stored securely? |  |  |
| 18. | Has the Board ensured that the pupils’ parents have been provided with the school’s child protection policy? |  |  |

**Appendix 2**

**Toileting/Intimate Care**

a. Children with specific toileting/intimate care needs

Normally a child who has specific toileting needs will have a special needs assistant assigned to him/her. It is very important that, before the child is enrolled in the school, a meeting is held at which all school personnel involved with the child attend along with the child’s parents/guardians. At that meeting the needs of the child should be addressed and agreement reached as to how the school can meet those needs. It is important that those involved with the intimate care of the child agree practices which are acceptable to the staff, the child and the parents. It may be useful to have an Intimate Care Policy outlining the agreed practices. Practices agreed should be sufficiently flexible to cover unforeseen situations, e.g. if personnel involved in assisting the child are absent.

The Board of Management should be made aware of practices agreed.

b. Toileting ‘Accidents’

Toileting accidents are not uncommon, particularly at junior level, and it is therefore prudent that schools address how these situations will be dealt with in the school. Parents may not be in a position to come to the school immediately should their child have a toileting accident and consideration has to be given to the implications of leaving a child unattended to in this situation. Unless there are very specific reasons why school staff should not attend to the child, procedures with which staff members are comfortable and which have due regard to minimising upset to the child should be agreed. A note should be kept of such incidents and parents should be informed.

**Appendix 3**

**Child Protection Practices**

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.

* 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. (See Intimate Care Policy Appendix 2).

School personnel should never engage in or allow:

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

All media products should be first checked for their appropriateness with regard to age and suitability.

**Visitors/Guest Speakers**

Vetted guest speakers and visiting teachers of varying disciplines, employed by the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire Fatima to perform specific duties, will be allowed work with a class unsupervised at the Principal’s discretion.

The school has a responsibility to check out the credentials of the visitor/guest speaker and to ensure that the material in use is appropriate.

**Accidents**

While every precaution will be taken under our Health and Safety Statement to ensure the safety of our children, we realise that accidents will; happened. Accidents will be noted in our Incident Report Book and will be addressed under our Accident Policy under 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 (if allocated) 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 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.

**Attendance**

Our school attendance will be monitored as per our Attendance Policy. With regard to child protection, we will pay particular attention to trends in non-attendance. Any pupil with a pattern on poor attendance will be monitored for 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 transport individual children 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 aids 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.

**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 eg RSE,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 Fatima to ensure that child protection with regards to Information and Communication Technology is adhered to. The Stay Safe lessons aswell as webwise.ie resources are used to implement the importance of using the internet appropriately to students.

The schools Broadband Programme (SBP) is managed by the PDST: Technology in Education.

All school computers content is filtered by the PDST, meaning unsuitable material cannot be viewed by children or staff on the school premises.

**Record Keeping**

Teachers will keep record of children’s attendance using the online school recording system alladin.ie. Roll books are updated daily. Sensitive information regarding children will be shared on a need-to-know basis.

**Supervision**

The schools supervision policy will be followed by all staff to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children at all breaks. A supervision rota will be displayed to cover both breaks. See school Supervision Policy for procedures relating to supervision.

**Visibility**

Teachers will ensure that children are visible in the school playground. Children will not be allowed to spend time in their classrooms or toilets where they would not be under adult supervision. They are not to leave the school playground or to engage with adults outside of the school playground.

**Appendix 4**

**Reporting Form for Child Protection and Welfare Concerns to a Health Board**

1. Date of Report

2. Name of person reporting

3. Address of person reporting

4. Relationship of reporting person with the child concerned

5. Method of report (telephone call, personal call to office)

6. Family Details

**Details of Child Concerned**

Surname

Forename

DOB

Male/female

Alias (known as)

Address:

Correspondence address (if different)

Telephone number

7. State whether you consider your report to indicate (a) suspected or actual child abuse or

(b) need for family support, giving reasons

Physical Sexual Emotional Neglect

Abuse Abuse Abuse

Suspect

Actual

8. Details of other family members/household members

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Age** | **Relationship to child** | **Employment/School** | **Location** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
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In cases of emergency, or outside HSE hours, reports should be made to An Garda Síochána.

9. Name of Other Professionals Involved with Child/ren and/or Parents/Carers.

**Public health nurse:**

**School:**

**General practitioner:**

**Any other agency or professional involved (please describe the nature of any involvement):**

**Report Details.**

10. Describe, as fully as possible the nature of the problem or incident being reported, giving

details of times and dates of individual incidents, the circumstances in which they

occurred, any other persons who were present at the time, and their involvement.

11. Has any explanation been offered by the child, and/or parents/carers, which would

account for the current problem or incident? (Details)

12. As far as possible, describe the state of the child/ren’s physical, mental and emotional

well-being.

13. If child abuse is being alleged, who is believed to be responsible for causing it?

Include (if known)

Name:

Address:

Degree of contact with child:

Degree of contact with other children:

14. Describe (in detail) any risks to which the child/ren in this situation is/are believed to be

exposed.

15. How did this information come to your attention?

16. What has prompted you to report your concern at this time?

17. What evidence of harm exists at present?

18. Are there any factors in the child and/or parents/carers’ present situation, which may have

relevance to the current concern? (for example, recent illness, bereavement, separation,

addiction, mental health problem or other difficulty)

19. Are there any factors in the child and/or parents/carers’ situation which could be

considered protective or helpful (for example, extended family or community support)?

20. Has any action been taken in response to the current concern or incident (Details)

21. Are the child’s parents/ carers aware that this concern is being reported to the HSE?

22. Is there a need for urgent protective action at this point?

23. Any other comments.

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_