

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

The staff, parents and management of St. Felim's National School have developed an agreed this policy in line with the current recommendations and guidelines relating 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 Science [DES], Child Protection Guidelines and 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 school's SPHE curriculum under the strand unit Safety and Protection.

On enrolment of their child, parents will be informed that the Stay Safe Programme is in use in the school and mention of this will be on one of the school's standard application forms.

The formal lessons of the Programme will be taught in their entirety every second year in accordance with the SPHE two-year cycle plan. All staff will make every effort to ensure that the messages of the Programme are enforced whenever possible.

SEN

Children with special needs will receive lessons appropriate for their maturity level and the Support teacher will help the class teacher decide on these lessons and teach them. The Stay Safe pack for children with learning difficulties will be utilised.

Parents who wish for their children to be withdrawn from these lessons should be encouraged and reassured as much as possible (eg giving them a copy of the lessons involved). If they still refuse to let their children take part, they must express their wishes in writing and make arrangements for the child to be withdrawn from the classroom for the duration of the lesson. Arrangements to facilitate them will not be made in school. If the child is not collected in time, the lesson will go ahead as planned.

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' and the DES document 'Child Protection, Guidelines and Procedures'. (See attached Appendix, pages 5 to 20 from the above DES Guidelines).

The Board of Management [BOM], of this school has appointed Mary Mc Govern as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and John Mc Hugh as the Deputy DLP.

The staff and management of this school have agreed:

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

PRACTICE

The staff and BOM of St. Felim's NS 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:

1. Physical contact

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 development stage of the child

School personnel should avoid doing anything of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves. Inappropriate physical contact also includes rough physical play and horseplay (tickling, wrestling, etc.)

2. Visitors / Guest Speakers

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

3. 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

comes to St. Felim's NS 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 agreed upon.

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.

4. 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 situations two members of staff should be present. A record of all such incidents will be kept and principal and parents will be notified.

5. One-to-One Teaching

It is the policy in this school that one-to-one teaching is sometimes in the best interest of the child. Every effort will be made to ensure that this teaching takes place in an open environment. Work being carried out by our special needs assistants will be carried out under the direction of the class teacher in an open environment.

6. Changing for games / PE / swimming

Classes will be accompanied by a male member of staff when visiting the swimming pool; this is so as to supervise in the male dressing room. All classes will be expected to dress and undress themselves for games / PE / swimming. Where assistance is needed in the case of a child with SEN this will be done in the communal areas 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 parent / guardian of the child will be asked to assist the child.**

7. Recruitment and selection of staff

The recruitment of staff and volunteers is crucial to ensuring that those working with the children in this school are safe adults in so far

as this can be determined. While correct procedures must always be followed in relation to advertising, interviewing and the selection of staff, other practices should also be considered. All applicants should be asked to supply in writing information which includes ...

- Appropriate personal details
- A résumé of past and current work / volunteering experience, indicating relevant qualifications or skills acquired
- At least two written references-verification of references should be sought through making verbal contact with the referees
- Garda vetting is essential in compliance with Circular 72/2017 and signing of the Statutory Agreement but it is important to note that Garda vetting is not itself a complete safeguard, as many perpetrators of abuse are not known to the authorities.

8. General Conduct

All children should be treated with equal respect -

School personnel should never engage in or allow...

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

All media products: CDs, DVDs, computer software, etc., should be checked for their appropriateness with regard to age and suitability. Where a doubt exists with regard to the suitability of material, parents, principal and / or BOM should be consulted as necessary.

9. Supervision of pupils

At all times there must be adequate supervision of pupils.

School staff has agreed an arrangement for the recording of accidents and incidents that . take place while children are under their supervision particularly in the school yard.

Adequate supervision will be provided at all times.

A child will never be taken alone by a member of staff on a journey/trip etc.

Where this school is aware of a court order being in place which prevents someone from having access to a child, a copy of that order is requested by the school: In the event of the parent / guardians non-compliance with the court order the Garda should be summoned to the school to enforce it.

10. Internet use - Acceptable Use Policy - Photos identifying pupils

Many aspects of Child Protection Policy require regular review and this is especially true of technological issues. It sometimes seems that, by the time we understand the Child Protection implications of a new technology it has already moved on. It is important that this school continues to aim at this moving target.

- Mobile/Camera phones are banned in school, unless in the case of an emergency where permission must be sought.
- Parents will be asked to sign a Consent Form when enrolling pupils to allow school photographs to be taken and published.

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

11. Links to other Policy / Planning Areas

Prevention - SPHE Curriculum, Strand Unit on 'Safety and Protection'
The School 'Code of Behaviour'

Procedures - Code of Behaviour
Anti-Bullying Policy
Health and Safety Statement

Practice - Swimming
Schools Tours / Outings

IT

Review and Monitoring

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the BOM 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's Child Protection Policy.

The BOM will ensure that adequate training and support is provided for all staff.

Policy Reviewed by the BOM on _____

Signed: _____

Chairperson
Board of Management