Child Protection Policy

Board of Management Scoil Fhursa

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 school's policies, practices and activities. Accordingly, in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills' *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools*, the Board of Management of Scoil Fhursa has agreed the following child protection policy:

1. 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.

2. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Bríd Ní Neachtain

3. The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Mairéad Nic Dhonnchadha

4. In its policies, practices and activities, Scoil Fhursa 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;
   - fully cooperate 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; and fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.

The school will also adhere to the above principles in relation to any adult pupil with a special vulnerability.

5. The staff, parents and management of Scoil Fhursa have developed and agreed this Child Protection 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

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

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- 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.

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

The formal lessons of the programme will be taught in their entirety in accordance with the SPHE plan.

Staff will make every effort to ensure that the messages of the programme are reinforced whenever possible. In Junior Infants a bilingual approach will be used if necessary when teaching the Stay Safe Programme. It will be taught through the medium of Irish in all other classes.

The parents of special needs pupils will be informed at a meeting of the safety skills that must be reinforced at home.

The Stay Safe Pack for children with learning difficulties can be used by teachers to reinforce the safety skills if required by these children.

The safety skills will also be reinforced for these children by the Learning Support Teacher, Resource Teacher and Special Needs Assistants if needed.

A letter about the Stay Safe Programme will be sent home to parents before the programme is taught.

Procedures:

All staff (teachers, SNA's, ancillary, secretarial, caretaking etc.) in this school will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in *'Children First'* and the Department of Education and Science document, '*Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools.'*. All staff will familiarise themselves with the above guidelines.

The Board of Management of this school has appointed Bríd Ní Neachtain as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Mairéad Nic Dhonnchadha as the deputy DLP.

The staff and management of this school have agreed:

- All concerns/disclosures involving child protection/child welfare issues will be reported in the first instance to the DLP (deputy DLP where appropriate).
- Each report to the DLP will be dated and signed by the person making that report.
- A strict adherence to maintaining confidentiality – information regarding concerns or disclosures of abuse should only be given on a 'need to know' basis.
- When teacher are writing reports in school they will use the child's Cláruimhir (not the child's name).

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Guidelines for Recognition of Child Abuse
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.
These are: -

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

See "Chapter 2 Definition and Recognition of Child Abuse" in Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary schools.
See Appendix 3 Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse in Child Protection Procedures.

Handling Disclosures from Children
When information is offered in confidence the member of staff will need to act with sensitivity in responding to the disclosure. The member of staff will need to reassure the child, and retain his/her trust, while explaining the need for action and the possible consequences, which will necessarily involve other adults being informed. It is important to tell the child that everything possible will be done to protect and support him/her but not to make promises that cannot be kept e.g. promising not to tell anyone else. The welfare of the child is regarded as the first and paramount consideration. In so far as is practicable, due consideration will be given, having regard to age and understanding, the wishes of the child.
The following advice is offered to school personnel to whom a child makes a disclosure of abuse.

- Remain calm.
- Listen to the child with sensitivity and openness.
- Take all disclosures seriously
- 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
- Explain that further help may have to be sought
- Record the discussion accurately and retain the record of dates, times, names, locations, context and factual details of conversation.

This information should then be passed onto the DLP and a record will be retained in the school.

See Chapter 3, Section 3.5 Dealing with Disclosures from Children in Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools. Also Chapter 4 Section 4.1 Action to be taken by School Personnel

Practice:

The following areas have been considered by the staff and Board of Management of this school 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.

(a) 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.

(b) Visitors/Guest Speakers:

Visitors/guest speakers should never be left alone with pupils. The school Principal has a responsibility to check out the credentials of the visitor/guest speaker and to ensure that the material in use by guests is appropriate. The class teacher will always be present.

(c) 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. Any deviation from the agreed procedure will be recorded and notified to the DLP and the parents/guardians. The school cannot undertake medical / nursing procedures.

(d) 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.

(e) One-to-one teaching

It is the policy in this school that one-to-one teaching is often in the best interest of some children. 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.

(f) 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 a 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 parent/guardian of the child will be asked to assist the child.

(g) Travelling

If it is necessary for a teacher to transport a child by car, said teacher must be accompanied by another staff member or two other children. The children travel in the back seat and wear seatbelts.

(h) Supervision of Pupils

At all times children will be adequately supervised. Teachers are responsible for the care of pupils from 08.30 am to 2.10 pm (Infants 8.30am to 1.10pm). The teachers will adhere strictly to the school's policy on supervision of children in the school yard.

(i) Internet Use

The Acceptable Use Policy will be adhered to by all staff, school personnel, pupils and visitors. 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 principal and parents.

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Links to other policy/planning areas:

Prevention	-	SPHE curriculum, Strand Unit on 'Safety and Protection',
	-	The School Code of Discipline
Procedures	-	Code of Behaviour
	-	Anti-Bullying Policy
	-	Health and Safety Statement
Practice	-	Swimming Policy
	-	School Tours/Outings
	-	IT – Acceptable Use Policy
		Mobile Phone Policy
		Staff Appointment Procedures

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 Board will ensure that appropriate and on going training as necessary will be available for the DLP and the DDLP.
- The Board fully endorses arrangements for the vetting of teaching and non-teaching staff as outlined in Circular 0094/2006 from the Department of Education and Science in June 2006.
- Recognising that the safety and wellbeing of children attending the school is a priority, the Board undertakes to include (a) Child Protection and (b) Health and Safety matters as items on the agenda of all Board of Management meetings.

The Board will ensure that all school staff, teaching and non-teaching, are aware of their obligations under the guidelines detailed in 'Children First' and the procedures to be followed in the event of concern. An individual copy of this policy document 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.

The Board recognises that it has two duties of care. The primary duty is the protection, safety and welfare of the children attending Scoil Fhursa. The Board as an employer also has duties and responsibilities towards its employees.

As an employer, the Board will seek legal advice if an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee.

The Board will adhere to the protocol outlined in 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, Department of Education and Science, 2011 under Chapter 5: "Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse by School Employees", to authorise any actions required to protect the children in its care. The Board notes that school employee may be subject to incorrect/partly correct allegations. Any allegation of abuse should be dealt with sensitively. The employee should be treated fairly which includes the right not to be judged in advance of a full and fair enquiry. The Board accepts that the principles of natural justice and fair procedure must be adhered to.

The Board believes that the academic, personal and social development of children flourishes in a culture where good relationships are encouraged, people feel valued and respected and appropriate support is available for those in difficulty.

The Board is committed to the maintenance of an environment where children feel secure, where they are encouraged to express themselves and are listened to. All children in the school will be made aware that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried. In addition, opportunities will be included in the curriculum for children to develop the skills they need to keep them safe.

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This policy statement regarding Child Protection at Scoil Fhursa applies to all staff, members of the Board of Management, volunteers and contractors working in the school.

This policy has been made available to school personnel and the Parents' Association and is readily accessible to parents on request. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

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 21/09/2022 [date]

Seán Ó Meachtair — Chairperson

Bríd Ní Meachtair — Principal

21/09/2022 — Date

September 2023 — Date of next review

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