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# **SCOIL AN CHROÍ RÓ NAOFA ÍOSA**

## **CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

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# CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

## Introduction

The staff, parents and Board of Management of Scoil an Chroí Ró Naofa Íosa developed and agreed the following Child Safeguarding Policy and accompanying Child Safeguarding Statement based on “*Child Safeguarding Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*” (Department of Education and Skills (DES), 2011 & 2017), “*Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*” (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011 & 2017) and Circular 0081/2017 (DES, 2017). These documents can be accessed on the Department’s website at <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Child-Protection/Information.html> and on the website of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs at [www.dcyia.ie](http://www.dcyia.ie).

Our school’s Child Safeguarding Policy addresses the responsibilities of the school in the following areas:

- Prevention – curriculum provision
- Practice – best practice in child safeguarding
- Procedures – procedures for dealing with concerns/disclosures

While the school recognises the normality of diversity in child rearing practices across different nationalities and cultures, the safety and well-being of each individual child will take precedence over any custom, practice or belief. Accordingly, child rearing practices which put the safety and well-being of a child at risk will be dealt with in accordance with the procedures and guidelines contained in the above named documents and the school’s child safeguarding policy.

The term “child abuse” as used in the policy is a generic term to encompass **neglect, emotional abuse/ill treatment, physical abuse and sexual abuse**. In addition, the Children First Act, 2015 establishes a new threshold of “**harm**” (“assault, ill-treatment or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects or is likely to seriously affect the child’s health, development or welfare, or sexual abuse of the child”) which will be considered alongside any abuse concerns.

A copy of our Child Safeguarding Policy will be posted on our school website and made available to all school personnel and the Parents’ Association. It will be readily accessible in the school office to all parents/guardians on request. An abbreviated version of the policy will be included in our School Information Booklet.

## Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

Scoil an Chroí Ró Naofa Íosa seeks to help the children in the school grow and develop into healthy, confident, mature adults, capable of realising their full potential as human beings. We aim to create a happy and safe environment for the children where they feel secure in the knowledge that if they have concerns, they will be listened to with understanding and respect, and have these concerns addressed appropriately.

Child safeguarding and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life. Therefore, our school's policies, practices and activities will adhere to the principles of best practice in child safeguarding and welfare by:

- recognising that the safeguarding and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations;
- co-operating fully with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child safeguarding and welfare matters;
- preparing and displaying a Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS);
- carrying out a Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment of any potential for harm to a child while attending the school or participating in school activities;
- adopting safe practices so as to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents;
- ensuring that school personnel do not take unnecessary risks that may leave them open to accusations of abuse;
- developing a practice of openness with parents/guardians, and encouraging parental involvement in the education of their children;
- respecting fully confidentiality requirements in dealing with child safeguarding matters.

### **Aims**

Our Child Safeguarding Policy aims:

- to develop awareness and responsibility in the area of child safeguarding amongst the whole school community.
- to put in place clear procedures for all school personnel dealing with suspicions and allegations of child abuse.
- to create a safe, trusting, responsive and caring school environment.
- to provide a personal safety skills education which specifically addresses abuse prevention for all children in the school.
- to identify curricular content and resources that contribute to the prevention of child abuse, and to enable children to properly deal with abuse should it occur.
- to ensure that all staff members are aware of and familiar with the Children First and DES guidelines and procedures in relation to reporting concerns and/or disclosures of child abuse.
- to identify other policy areas which need to be amended.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Board of Management**

The **Board of Management** has primary responsibility for the care and welfare of the children and staff of the school. In exercising this responsibility, the Board will:

- appoint a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and deputy DLP with specific responsibility for child safeguarding.
- have clear procedures for dealing with allegations or suspicions of child abuse.
- monitor the progress of children at risk.
- ensure that curricular provision is in place for the prevention of child abuse.
- investigate and respond to allegations of child abuse against a school employee.
- decide on teachers' attendance at child safeguarding meetings/case conferences and advise teachers before attending such meetings/conferences.

- undertake an annual review of its Child Safeguarding Statement and Child Safeguarding Policy and their implementation by the school, and develop/implement an action plan to address any areas for improvement identified by the review.
- notify the Parents' Association that the review has been undertaken, and provide the patron and/or the Department with a record of the review and its outcome upon request.

### **Designated Liaison Person and Deputy Designated Liaison Person**

The Board of Management of Scoil an Chroí Ró Naofa Íosa has appointed **Mr. Kieran Lyons, Principal, as Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Ms. Clara Donohoe, Deputy Principal, as Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLp)** respectively. Their names and respective titles are displayed inside the main entrance door to the school.

The DLP will be referred to solely for the remainder of this policy; however it is important to note that the DDLp will take on the role and responsibilities of the DLP when required in support of, or in the absence of, the DLP.

The DLP has specific responsibility for child safeguarding and will represent the school in all dealings with the Child and Family Agency (CFA)/Tusla, An Garda Síochána and other agencies and bodies in relation to child safeguarding issues. In addition, he will:

- inform all school personnel of the availability of “*Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*” and “*Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*”.
- photocopy/circulate to school personnel, Parents' Association etc. our school's Child Safeguarding Statement and Child Safeguarding Policy, and advise on good practice.
- be available to staff for consultation regarding suspicions or disclosures of abuse or harm, keep records of consultations, and seek advice from the CFA/Tusla etc. where appropriate.
- report suspicions and allegations of child abuse or harm to the CFA/Tusla or/and An Garda Síochána; make a joint report with a teacher to the CFA/Tusla, in instances of alleged “harm”; submit a report to the CFA/Tusla as a mandated report, i.e. the DLP will take the “harm” threshold as the default position where there is any doubt about whether a concern is at or above the defined threshold of “harm” outlined later on in this policy.
- provide a “Child Safeguarding Oversight Report” as part of the principal's report at every Board of Management meeting, i.e. inform the Board of Management of cases where a report involving a child in the school has been submitted to the CFA/Tusla, and cases where the DLP has sought advice from the CFA/Tusla and as a result of this advice no report was made. The oversight report will also include the number of all such cases and this will be recorded in the minutes of the Board meeting. In the interest of protecting the anonymity of the child, no details of individual cases or reports will be disclosed to the Board of Management unless there are issues which need to be addressed directly by the Board.
- maintain proper records, confidentially, in a secure setting.
- keep up-to-date on current developments regarding child safeguarding.

### School Staff

All staff have a general duty of care to ensure that procedures are in place to protect children from harm, and that they adhere to these procedures. The Children First Act, 2015 has placed specific statutory obligations on certain organisations that provide services to children, including all schools. It has also placed specific statutory obligations on certain professionals, including all registered teachers, who are referred to as **mandated persons** in the Act. A statutory obligation is an obligation imposed by legislation. In addition, under section 14 of the Children First Act, 2015 every registered teacher, as a mandated person, now has a statutory obligation to make his or her own report to the CFA/Tusla where a child safeguarding concern is at or above a threshold of harm as defined in the Act. In these procedures, such reports are referred to as mandated reports. All sexual abuse falls in the category of “harm” and therefore must be reported as a mandated report.

The threshold of harm, at which a registered teacher as a mandated person has a statutory obligation to report to the CFA/Tusla under the Children First Act, 2015 is reached when he or she knows, believes or has reasonable grounds to suspect that:

- a child’s needs have been **neglected**, are being neglected, or are at risk of being neglected to the point where the child’s health, development or welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.
- a child has been, is being or is at risk of **emotional abuse/ill-treatment** to the point where the child’s health, development or welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.
- a child has been, is being or is at risk of **physical abuse** and that as a result the child’s health, development or welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.
- a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being sexually abused has a statutory obligation to report this to the CFA/Tusla. As all **sexual abuse** falls within the category of seriously affecting a child’s health, welfare or development, all concerns about sexual abuse must be submitted as a mandated report to the CFA/Tusla.

All concerns about “harm” are deemed to have met the abuse threshold but the corollary might not be the case – i.e. all abuse concerns may not be deemed to reach the threshold of “harm”. The distinction between a reasonable concern of abuse and a reasonable concern of harm is important for teachers as it determines whether the report to the CFA/Tusla will be made as a mandatory joint report by a teacher and DLP. However, crucially, the distinction has no bearing whatsoever on the obligation to report, since in both instances – i.e. where there is a reasonable concern of abuse or a reasonable concern of harm, there is an obligation to report.

In instances of “harm”, the teacher must liaise with the DLP and jointly consider whether the concern is at or above the defined threshold of “harm”. Where it is decided that there is a concern of harm, a joint report, i.e. teacher and DLP, should be made to the CFA/Tusla. Whilst the statutory obligation to make a mandatory report rests with the individual teacher, this obligation is deemed to be fulfilled where the teacher and DLP make a joint mandatory report. The facility to make a joint report also ensures that the DLP is aware of all reports

to the CFA/Tusla. It remains the legal prerogative of any teacher under the Children First Act, 2015 and the 2017 Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, to make either an individual report about a concern of “harm” as a mandated person, or to report a concern of abuse in circumstances where the DLP has decided not to do so. In such cases the teacher must provide a copy of the report to the DLP.

### **Prevention of Child Abuse**

1. The **Stay Safe** programme is the primary resource used in Scoil an Chroí Ró Naofa Íosa 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 (Personal Safety). Staff will ensure that the messages of the programme are reinforced whenever possible, through formal and informal work and activities. In the case of children with special educational needs (SEN), the class teacher will differentiate the Stay Safe programme at class level and liaise with the resource teachers with a view to differentiating individual lessons as appropriate, if necessary, using where appropriate *“Personal Safety Skills For Children With Learning Difficulties”* (Lawlor & MacIntyre, 1996). In the case of children who have poor understanding of English, the class teacher will differentiate the Stay Safe programme at class level and liaise with the support teachers with a view to differentiating individual lessons, if necessary.
2. The Board of Management will ensure compliance with the Department’s circulars and any other legal requirements in relation to Garda vetting of school personnel and other persons who have unsupervised access to the children in our school. Where a person is being considered for employment in the school, the Board will check the person’s suitability to work with children and ensure compliance with the Department’s requirements in relation to the provision of a child safeguarding related statutory declaration and associated form of undertaking by the prospective appointee.
3. Effective child safeguarding depends on the skills, knowledge and values of personnel working with the children and their families. The Board of Management recognises the value of relevant training and education as an important means of achieving this, and will make every effort to ensure that all school personnel and Board members are familiar with best child safeguarding practices and procedures. It is envisaged that this will be achieved by the school developing a culture of awareness and knowledge of these procedures amongst all school personnel and, where possible, ensuring that external training is undertaken.

### **Identification of Child Abuse**

All staff (teachers, Special Need Assistants and ancillary staff) in Scoil an Chroí Ró Naofa Íosa will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in Children First and the DES guidelines. All signs and symptoms will 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

**Chapter 2: Definition and Recognition of Child Abuse** (*Child Safeguarding Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools, DES 2017, p.9-18*) provides a good reference or starting point in the identification process.

### **Responding to an Allegation or Disclosure of Child Abuse**

1. If a member of staff receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused or is being abused or is at risk of abuse s/he must, without delay, report the matter to the DLP. If the DLP decides that the concerns of the member of staff should not be reported to the CFA/Tusla, the member of staff will be given a clear statement as to the reasons why action is not being taken. That said, every registered teacher should note that as a mandated person the statutory obligation under the Children First Act 2015 to make a mandated report to the CFA/Tusla rests with the individual teacher and this applies regardless of whether or not the DLP reports the concern in question. However, a registered teacher who makes a mandated report to the CFA/Tusla jointly with the DLP meets his or her statutory obligation to report to the CFA/Tusla under the Children First Act 2015. In that regard, the registered teacher shall liaise with the DLP and follow the procedures set out in Chapter 5 (*Child Safeguarding Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools, p.34-43*).
2. In the case of disclosure by a child to a member of staff he/she must, without delay, report the matter to the DLP. He/She will need to act with sensitivity in responding to the disclosure. He/She 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, to the wishes of the child. In all cases, the staff member to whom the disclosure has been made should:
  - 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 a record of dates, times, names, locations, context and factual details of conversation.
  - Check back with the child that what was heard is correct and understood.
  - Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser.

- Ensure that the child understands the procedures that will follow.
  - Treat the information confidentially, subject to the requirements of the Children First National Guidance 2017 and relevant legislation.
3. Any comment by the child concerned to a member of staff, or by any other person must be recorded, quoting words actually used, as soon as possible after the comment has been made. The record of the comment or any discussion must be signed, dated and given to the DLP for retention. Any observations, e.g. bruising, body marks etc. should be noted carefully and dated. Signs of physical injury must be described in detail and, if appropriate, sketched.

### **Reporting**

The guiding principles in regard to reporting child abuse may be summarised as follows:

- a. The safety and well-being of the child must take priority.
- b. Reports should be made without delay to the Children and Family Services of the CFA/Tusla using the Child Safeguarding and Welfare Report Form.

If the DLP is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion/allegation, the Chairperson of the Board of Management will be informed before the DLP makes contact with the relevant authorities, unless the situation demands that more immediate action be taken for the safety of the child, in which case the Chairperson will be informed as soon as possible after the report has been submitted. In all cases, the DLP will retain a record of the consultation with the CFA/Tusla, which will note the date, the name of the CFA/Tusla official and the advice given.

The school will inform parents/guardians that a report is being submitted to the CFA/Tusla or An Garda Síochána and record the information communicated to the parent/guardian, unless by doing so, the child will be placed at further risk or (b) in cases where the family's knowledge of the report could impair the CFA/Tusla's ability to carry out a risk assessment or (c) if the reporter is of the reasonable opinion that by doing so it may place the reporter at risk of harm from the family. A decision not to inform a parent/guardian should be briefly recorded together with the reasons for not doing so. In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk, and a Duty Social Worker is unavailable, an Garda Síochána will be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending CFA/Tusla intervention.

### **Allegations Against School Employees**

The most important consideration for the Board of Management of the school is the safety and safeguarding of the children in its care. However, employees also have a right to safeguarding against claims which are false or malicious. As employers, the Board of Management will seek legal advice as the circumstances can vary from one case to another. All allegations against school employees will involve:

- a. The reporting procedure.



- b. The procedure for dealing with the employee.

The DLP has responsibility for reporting allegations or disclosures of child abuse to the Board of Management and the CFA/Tusla. The Chairperson of the Board has responsibility, acting in consultation with his/her Board, for addressing the employment issues.

### **Reporting Procedure**

Once a disclosure is made by a child, a written record of the disclosure will be made as soon as possible by the person receiving it. Where an allegation of abuse is made by an adult, a written statement will be sought from this person. The DLP has responsibility for reporting allegations or disclosures of child abuse to the Board of Management and The CFA/Tusla. If the allegation is against the DLP, the Deputy DLP or Chairperson of the Board of Management will assume responsibility for reporting the matter. A written statement of the allegation will be sought from the person/agency making the allegation. School employees, other than the DLP, who receive allegations against another school employee or who have concerns regarding the conduct or actions of a colleague, must immediately report the matter to the DLP. In all cases, the reporting procedure must be in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Children First and DES guidelines.

### **Procedure for Dealing with the Employee**

The Chairperson of the Board of Management and the DLP will make the employee aware privately:

- a. that an allegation has been made against him/her.
- b. the nature of the allegation.
- c. whether or not the CFA/Tusla or the Gardaí have been/will be/must be/should be informed.

The employee will be given a copy of the written allegation and any other relevant documentation while ensuring that appropriate measures are in place to protect the child. Once the matter has been reported to the CFA/Tusla the employee will be requested to respond to the allegation in writing to the Board of Management within a specified period and told that this may be passed onto the Gardaí, the CFA/Tusla and legal advisers.

The priority in all cases is that no child be exposed to unnecessary risk. Therefore, as a matter of urgency, the Chairperson will take any necessary protective measures, having first consulted with the CFA/Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána for advice as to the action those authorities would consider necessary. These measures will be proportionate to the level of risk and will not unreasonably penalise the employee in any way unless to protect the child.

If the nature of the allegations warrant immediate action in the Chairperson's opinion, the Board of Management will be convened to consider the matter. The Board will consider feedback, if any has been received, from the CFA/Tusla, the Gardaí or other relevant source. This may result in the Board directing that the employee absent him/herself from the school forthwith while the matter is being investigated. Should the Board of Management direct that the employee absent him/herself as above, such absence of the employee would be regarded as administrative leave of absence with pay and not

suspension, and would not imply any degree of guilt. In such cases, the DES will be immediately informed.

### **Links to Other Policy / Planning Areas**

Our school's policy on child safeguarding has links to a number of other policies within the school in the areas of Prevention, Procedures and Practice. These include:

**Prevention:** SPHE curriculum – Strand Unit on “Safety and Protection”, Discipline and Code of Behaviour Policy.

**Procedures:** Anti-Bullying Policy, Adult Bullying and Sexual Harassment Policy, Health and Safety Policy.

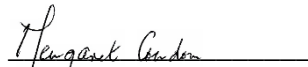
**Practice:** Swimming Policy Statement, Supervision Policy, School Excursion Policy, ICT Acceptable Use Policy, Teaching Practice and Work Experience Policy.

### **Review and Monitoring**

Our Child Safeguarding Policy and accompanying Child Safeguarding Statement will be monitored and reviewed by the Board of Management annually or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which they refer. Written notification that the review has been undertaken will be provided to the Parents' Association and to the school patron. A copy of this notification will be published on the school's website. Records of the review and its outcome shall be retained and made available, if requested, to the patron and/or the DES.

***Policy adopted by the Board of Management of Scoil an Chroí Ró Naofa Íosa on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018 and updated on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020.***

**Signed:**



Ms. Margaret Condon  
Chairperson Board of Management

**Date:**

16<sup>th</sup> November 2020