



# Gaelscoil na Cruaiche

(Bunaithe: 1995. Príomhoide: Mairéad Ní Ruáin)

Cathair na Mart, Contae Mhaighéo

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## Child Protection Policy

### Introductory Statement

The staff, parents and Board of Management of Gaelscoil na Cruaiche, Westport, have developed and agreed this policy in line with ***Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children(2017)*** and ***Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017***.

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.

### Aims:

- to ensure that all the school community (including teachers, parents, S.N.A. 'secretary, etc.) 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 in all its forms-emotional, physical, sexual and neglect.
- to put in place clear procedures for good practice to protect all children and school personnel
- to enable children to properly deal with abuse if it occurs
- to provide for ongoing training in this and all related areas for all school staff
- to develop awareness and responsibility in the area of child protection amongst the whole school community.

### **Prevention:**

The Stay Safe Programme is the primary resource used to provide education for children on abuse prevention. The programme is taught as part of Gaelscoil na Cruaiche's SPHE curriculum, under the strand unit Safety and Protection. The formal lessons of the programme will be taught in their entirety every second year in accordance with SPHE two-year cycle plan. The programme will be taught in Senior infants, 2nd class, 4th class, and 6th class.

## Procedures

All staff (teachers, S.N.A., ancillary, secretarial etc.) will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in 'Children First' and the DES document 'Child Protection Procedures'.

**The procedures/guidelines are laid out as follows:**

### **1. Appointment of a designated liaison person (DLP)**

The Board of Management of Gaelscoil na Cruaiche has appointed the Acting Principal, Caroline Nic Dhonncha as the DLP to have specific responsibility for child protection.

Máire Ní Chionnaigh has been appointed as Deputy DLP to take the place of the DLP if she is unavailable.

The position of DLP will be addressed at the first meeting of each new Board of Management. The DLP will continue to act until such time as she is replaced by the Board of Management for whatever reason.

### **2. Roles, Responsibilities and Guidelines**

#### **2.1 Role of Board of Management**

- the Board of Management has primary responsibility for the welfare of all pupils
- to appoint a DLP and Deputy DLP
- to have clear procedures for dealing with allegations or suspicions of child abuse
- to monitor the progress of children at risk
- to ensure that curricular provision is in place for the prevention of child abuse
- to investigate and respond to allegations against a school employee if he/she has been reported to the HSE or Gardaí
- to decide on teachers' attendance at child protection meetings/case conferences and to advise teachers before attending such meetings/conferences.

#### **2.2 Role of staff**

- teaching of a Child Protection Programme-Stay Safe
- recording of and responding to allegations of child abuse as recommended in the Child Protection Guidelines (DES)
- it is the responsibility of all teachers and staff members to familiarise themselves with the ***Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017)*** especially

**Chapter 2-**Definition and Recognition of Child Abuse(attached)

**Chapter 3-** Mandated Persons

-handout on suggestions for monitoring the progress of children considered at risk. (DES Guidelines) (att.)

#### ***The staff and management of Gaelscoil na Cruaiche have agreed that:***

- 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.

### **2.3 Role of D.L.P.**

- At the first staff meeting of the new school year the Acting Principal Caroline Nic Dhonncha will describe her role as DLP and inform new staff members of ***Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017)***
- She will provide every member of staff with copies of chapters 2 & 3 & appendix 3 of these guidelines. The DLP will advise staff as regards ***Best Practise for Child Protection.***
- Caroline Nic Dhonncha is the Designated Liaison Person for the school in all dealings with Health Service Executive, gardaí and other parties re allegations/concerns about child abuse.
- Resource person for staff who have child protection concerns
- Should be knowledgeable about child protection and trained
- DLP must notify Board of Management immediately if report is made to HSE.

#### **Action to be taken by school personnel**

School employees who receive an allegation or have a suspicion re abuse should without delay report this to the DLP.

If the DLP is satisfied there are reasonable grounds for concern s/he should report the matter immediately to the HSE. The DLP is directly responsible for child protection in the school. It is the responsibility of every staff member to ensure the safety of the children.

#### **Guidelines for Handling Disclosures from Children**

When a child discloses alleged abuse to a staff member, the person receiving that information should listen carefully and supportively. Great care must be taken not to abuse the child's trust. This should not be a formal interview. Follow this procedure:

- Listen to the child
- Do not ask leading questions nor make suggestions to the child
- You may ask questions like 'what happened next?'
- Offer reassurance but do not make promises
- Do not stop the child recalling significant events
- Do not over-react
- Explain that further help may have to be sought
- Record the discussion accurately noting:
  - what, where, when
  - descriptions and possible sketches of physical injuries
  - explanations of injuries using direct quotations if appropriate.

**Retain the record securely. In Gaelscoil na Cruaiche, all records are coded and kept in a secure filing cabinet in the office.**

The staff member should obtain only necessary relevant records. It is not the responsibility of school personnel to investigate allegations of abuse.

The DLP should then be informed and given relevant records. If the suspected abuser is the DLP the suspicion and any records will be passed on to the Chairperson Sandra Uí Chorcoráin who will proceed as per ***Child Protection Procedures, DES 2017.***

#### **Suspicious of Abuse**

When child abuse is suspected, it is essential to have a record of all information available. School personnel should note carefully what they have observed and when they observed it. Any comment by the child concerned, or by any other person, about how an injury occurred should be recorded, preferably quoting words actually used, as soon as possible after the comment is made. The DLP will retain these records in a secure place.

**Attachments with this policy** taken from *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017)* and essential reading for school personnel:

- ❖ Chapter 2: Definition of Child Abuse /Types of Child Abuse & how they may be recognized.
- ❖ Chapter 3: Mandated Persons
- ❖ Handout on suggestions for monitoring the progress of children considered at risk. (DES Guidelines)

### **Children with Special Vulnerabilities**

Certain children are more vulnerable to abuse than others. These include children with disabilities and children who, for one reason or another, are separated from parents or other family members and who depend on others for their care and protection. The categories of abuse-neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse-may be applicable, but may take a slightly different form. For example, abuse may take the form of deprivation of basic rights, harsh disciplinary regimes or the inappropriate use of medications or physical restraints.

### **DLP actions**

- If concerned/unsure consult the Duty Social Worker (DSW) for advice **not** naming the child. The DLP should be explicit that she is requesting advice and not making a report.
- If satisfied there are reasonable grounds for concern report in person/writing/phone to DSW.
- Report should include all information sought in Standard Reporting Form.
- Phone report should be followed by written reporting form.
- In an emergency contact An Garda Síochána.

### **DLP Actions continued**

- Inform parent/carer (unless danger to child). The reasons for not informing parents/carers should be briefly recorded.
- Inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management, Sandra Uí Chocoráin that a report has been made.
- If DLP decides not to report, the employee who made initial report should be given a written report outlining reasons for not reporting.
- This employee is free to consult with/ report to HSE him/herself. Again, the standard reporting form to be used. *The provisions of the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 apply, once they report reasonably and in good faith.*

## **Procedures for Board of Management in cases of allegations or suspicions of child abuse by a school employee:**

### **A. Reporting**

#### ***In the event of receiving a complaint or suspicion re. an employee:***

1. The DLP will immediately report the matter to the Duty Social Worker by phone. In the event of an emergency or the non-availability of H.S.E. Staff, the report will be made to An Garda Síochána.
2. She will seek a written statement of the allegation from the person/agency making the allegation. Parents/Guardians may make a statement on behalf of a child.
3. The DLP will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management, Sandra Uí Chorcoráin of the allegation.
4. If the DLP, following consultation with the H.S.E., decides that the matter is not for reporting, she must inform the Chairperson. They must then inform, in writing, the person or agency making the allegation, of the reasons for this decision. If the person or agency still has concerns, they are free to consult with or report to the H.S.E. Or Gardaí on an individual basis.
5. School employees, other than the DLP who receive allegations of abuse against another employee should report the matter without delay to the DLP. The DLP will then follow the procedures outlined in 1) and 2) above.
6. School employees who form suspicions regarding the conduct of another school employee should consult with the DLP. If they are then satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicions the DLP should report the matter to the Duty Social Worker immediately. She should also report the matter to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

### **B. Responding**

- When the Chairperson becomes aware of an allegation of abuse against a school employee, she will privately inform the employee of the following:
  - The fact that an allegation has been made against him/her.
  - The nature of the allegation
  - Whether or not the matter has been reported to the Duty Social Worker by the DLP.
- The employee will be given a copy of the written allegation and any other relevant documents by the Chairperson Sandra Uí Chorcoráin. The employee will be requested to respond to the allegation in writing to the Board of Management within a specified period of time. The employee will be told that his/her explanation to the Board of Management will also be passed on to the H.S.E.
- The Chairperson will consider whether there is a risk to pupils' safety. If the Chairperson considers there is a risk, she may require the employee to absent themselves from school with immediate effect. If unsure, the Chairperson will consult with the H.S.E. or Gardaí.
- Any absence by a school employee will be regarded as administrative leave of absence with pay and not as a suspension. Such a leave of absence would not imply any degree of guilt on the part of the school employee. When such a leave of absence is invoked the Department of Education and Science would be contacted with regard to:
  - (i) Formal approval for the paid leave of absence of the school employee
  - (ii) Department sanction for the employment of a substitute teacher.
- Once it is deemed necessary by the DLP and Chairperson to make a report, the latter will convene a meeting of the Board of Management to inform the members of the nature of the allegations, the actions taken in respect of same and the outcome of any consultation with the H.S.E. and/or Gardaí. Members of the Board of Management must be reminded of their serious responsibilities to maintain strict confidentiality about all matters relating to the issue.

- In the case where the allegations of abuse relate to the past employment of the school employee and where the allegations are being investigated by either the H.S.E. or the Garda Síochána, the Chairperson of the Board of Management Sandra Uí Chorcoráin will maintain regular and close liaison with those authorities and a decision on the position of the school employee will be taken having due regard to the advice given to the Board of Management by those authorities.

## Organisational Implications

### **Induction of Teachers and Ancillary Staff:**

The DLP will be responsible for informing all new teachers and Board of Management of Gaelscoil na Cruaiche of the Children's First Guidelines (2017). The DLP will ensure that all members of staff have a copy of the school's Child Protection Policy and parts 2 & 3 from the Guidelines. The staff in Gaelscoil na Cruaiche are fully trained in Child Protection. ***(Reviewed May 2022)***

### **Supervision:**

Every effort will be made to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children throughout the school day. The Acting Principal Caroline Nic Dhonncha will supervise towards the front of the school in the morning. At home time a teacher will supervise at the front gate to ensure that children are collected by parent or designated person. A second teacher will accompany and supervise the children who travel by bus. Should a child miss their bus the supervising teacher will contact the child's parents. Four teachers will be on corridor duty from 8.45-9.00a.m. Written permission is also necessary if a child is to cycle/walk home unaccompanied.

A roster of staff on supervision duty for breaks and home time is displayed on the notice board in the staff room and in the classrooms. Children will not leave the schoolyard unless they have permission from the supervising teacher -going to the toilet, bringing an injured child to the staff room, retrieving the ball if it's kicked over the fence. They will not engage with adults outside of the schoolyard.

Children are not allowed to spend breaks in the classroom. A child who is waiting to be picked up by a parent during break will sit on the chair opposite the staff room and will be signed out by parent.

### **Collection of Children:**

Parents are asked to notify the school in the event that someone other than the minder/relative named, is collecting their child(ren). They are reminded to do so regularly in the weekly newsletter. ***(Reviewed May 2022)***

### **Visitors:**

All unexpected visitors to the school are expected to report to the secretary's office on arrival. Visitors/guest speakers should never be left alone with pupils. The Acting Principal Caroline Nic Dhonncha has a duty to check out the credentials of all such personnel and to ensure that the material in use by same is appropriate.

Individuals who have reason to be in the school environs on a regular basis and have contact with the children will be asked to read the ***Child Protection Policy and sign the page on handling Disclosures from Children.***

### **After school classes:**

Extracurricular classes are the responsibility of the teachers involved and the parents who have chosen such classes.

### **School photographer:**

'County Photos' have their own Garda Vetting.

### **Transport/escort of pupils:**

Teachers/ancillary staff are directed not to give lifts or escort sick pupils home on their own. In the event of an emergency where this directive cannot be implemented, a full record of event is

reported to the principal and parents.

**Bullying:**

Bullying behaviour will be addressed under our Anti-Bullying Policy.

**School Tours/Trips:**

The rolla will be called prior to children leaving on a tour. The bus must provide a functioning seatbelt for every child/adult. The higher the risk factor of the activity/venue, the greater the number of teachers/responsible adults involved. A head count will be done on a regular basis and on getting on the bus to return to the school. No mobile phones or devices are allowed on school trips.

**Bus to/from School:**

These are not directly the school's responsibility, but the DLP, Caroline Nic Dhonncha will remind pupils of the need for appropriate behaviour and safety while travelling on the buses.

**One-to-One Teaching:**

One-to-one teaching may at times be in the best interest of the child. Written consent is required for all one-to-one teaching. Where possible, children with SEN will be taught in small groups. The classroom door will be left open if a teacher is alone with a child.

**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:

- ✓ **is it acceptable to the child?**
- ✓ **is it open and not secretive?**
- ✓ **the age and development of the child.**

School personnel should avoid doing anything of a personal nature for children that they can do themselves.

**Inappropriate physical contact by pupils:**

Children in the school setting can at times be overly emotionally attached to their teacher especially where small group or one-to-one teaching is taking place. This attachment can manifest itself sometimes in wanting to show affection to their teacher which can appear inappropriate to an onlooker.

Such behaviour is also not in the best interest of either pupil/teacher. Should a teacher have any concerns, a meeting will be arranged with the pupil's parents and the matter discussed. A written copy of what has been agreed will be made and kept in the child's file. This is for the protection of all parties.

**Toilets:**

It is school policy that only one child is permitted to enter the toilet area at a time. Children who need to use the toilet during yard time must get permission from the teacher on duty.

**Toileting Accidents:**

Clean underwear/change of clothes will be kept in the school to cope with such accidents. If a pupil for whatever reason cannot clean or change themselves and the parents cannot be contacted, the child will be assisted by members of staff familiar to the child. In such situations two members of staff should be present. A record of all incidents will be kept, and parents notified.

A supply of sanitary towels will also be kept in the office.



**Intimate care/toileting needs for special needs children:**

Prior to the pupil coming to school, a meeting between parents, class teacher, S.N.A. and if appropriate the pupil, will take place. 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 involved in this care will be identified and provisions will be made for occasions when staff are absent. A written copy of what is agreed will be made and kept in the pupil's file. Two members of staff will be present when dealing with intimate care toileting needs. Any deviation from the agreed procedures will be recorded and notified to the DLP and parents.

**Changing clothes for Sports/P.E./Swimming:**

It is expected that children will dress themselves for the above activities. If a child needs help while changing, it will be done in an open area with others present and with the parents' permission. At no time will a child be helped dress/undress by a teacher or helper in a cubicle. If a child needs privacy while changing the child's parent/guardian must be present. A satisfactory level of supervision must be always in place.

## Curricular Implications

The Child Protection Programme in use in Gaelscoil na Cruaiche is The Stay Safe Programme. The programme will be taught in Senior Infants, 2nd Class, 4th Class, and 6th Class.

The SPHE programme will be supported by the Walk Tall Programme and the RSE Programme.

### Policies that support Child Protection:

- Enrolment
- Anti-Bullying
- Health and Safety
- First-Aid
- Healthy Eating
- School Attendance
- Fire Drill
- Administration of Medicine
- Critical Incident
- Internet Usage

### Programmes that support Child Protection:

- Weaving & Wellbeing – 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> class
- Fun Friends (well-being programme for junior classes, when needed)
- Friends For Life Programme (well-being programme for mid/senior classes, when deemed necessary)

### Programmes used in Learning Support:

- ❖ DESTY – Stephanie O’ Malley
- ❖ Zones of Regulation
- ❖ Stop, Think, Do
- ❖ Talkabout
- ❖ Socially Speaking
- ❖ How does your Engine Run?
- ❖ Think it, Say it
- ❖ Say & Do-Social Scenes
- ❖ Funpraxia-book & regulation stations – Brenda Cassidy
- ❖ Transition from Primary to Secondary School (NEPS resource)
- ❖ Selection of board games, promoting personal, social & emotional skills.

*(reviewed in May 2022)*

### Books that support Child Protection:

- What to do when you worry too much
- Big Book of Calmers
- Unstoppable Me
- Incredible You
- I think, I am
- The Red Beast
- Starving the: Stress Gremlin / Anger Gremlin /Anxiety Gremlin
- Frog’s Breathtaking Speech
- The Panicosaurus
- Fill your Bucket
- That Chicadee Feeling
- Jenny Mosley’s ‘Small Books’

- Wonder
- Prim Ed.Health & Values
- 101 Games for Self-Esteem
- Bia Sláintiúil don Bheatha

**Cds/Staff Share:**

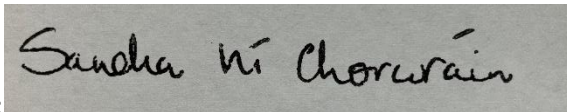
- Zone for Kids – Derval Dunford/Ann Caulfield
- Mindfulness Matters ‘Súí’- Derval Dunford
- Staff Share > YouTube/OSPS

**Review and Monitoring**

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Board of Management annually. The Board of Management will ensure that adequate training and support is provided for all staff.

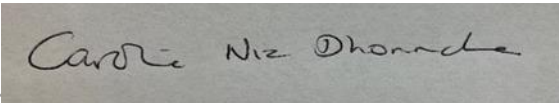
**Policy Review**

The Policy was reviewed in full in May 2022 and will be reviewed on a yearly basis.



Síniú:  
Cathaoirleach

**Dáta: 05/05/2022**



Síniú:  
Príomhoide

**Dáta: 05/05/2022**