



St. Bride's National School

Child Protection Policy

St. Bride's National School aims to provide its pupils with the highest standards of care and protection, in order to promote each child's well-being and safeguard him/her from harm while in the school. The Board of Management of St. Brides National School has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (updated 2023).

Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

The Principal Ms Aoife Connolly will act as DLP. Should circumstances warrant it, Mr Pdraigh Mc Inerney, shall act as Deputy DLP. The DLP has specific responsibility for child protection and will represent the school in all dealings with the HSE, An Garda Síochána 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.

In its policies, practices and activities, St. Brides National School will adhere to the following principles of best practice in child protection and welfare:

The school will

- Recognise the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations;
- Fully co-operate with relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters;
- Adopt safe practices to minimize 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.

Certain policies such as St. Brides National School Code of Behaviours, Anti-bullying Policy, Enrolment Policy and the 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 outlined 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.

School measures taken to protect the children in our care:

- It is policy in our school to remind staff regularly at staff meetings of who the DLP and Deputy DLP are.
- St Bride’s National School will fully implement the Stay Safe Programme (SPHE Policy).
- The name of the DLP and the Deputy DLP are displayed in a prominent position near the main entrance to the school along with a child friendly version of the Child Safeguarding Statement to include a picture of the DLP.
- In addition to informing the Board of those cases where a report involving a child has been submitted to the HSE, the DLP shall also inform the Board of cases where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report was made. At each Board of Management meeting the Principal’s report shall include the number of all such cases and this shall be recorded in the minutes of the Board meeting.
- This Child Protection Policy has been made available to school personnel and the Parent’s Association and is readily accessible to Parents on request and via the website. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the Patron if requested.
- St Bride’s National School will undertake an annual review of its Child Protection Policy and its implementation by the school. A checklist, to be used in undertaking the review is included (Appendix 2). The Board of Management shall make arrangements to inform school personnel that the review has been undertaken. Written notification that the review has been undertaken shall be provided to the Parents Association. A record of the review and its outcome shall be made available, if requested, to the Patron and the Department.

This policy was reviewed at a Board of Management meeting in October 2025.

Signed: _____

Chairperson of BOM

Date: _____

Signed: _____

Principal

Date: _____

Date of next review: _____

Appendix I

Best Practice in Child Protection in our School

Stay Safe 'Best Practice in Child Protection was used as a guide in drafting our best practice guidelines for our school'

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 it's 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.

(b) Visitors/Guest Speakers:

Visitors/guest speakers should never be left alone with pupils. The school (principal/teachers) 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.

(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 plan 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 in the care plan will be made and kept in the child's file. 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.

(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

One to one teaching should only take place if it is 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 will be carried out under the direction of the class teacher in an open environment. A copy of the time table is given to the principal and on display in the classroom.

(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 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. At all times there must be adequate supervision of pupils.

See Risk Assessment and Child Safeguarding Statement for added child safety procedures when swimming.

(g) Supervision of children

As per the Child Safeguarding Statement children are adequately supervised during the school day on all school related activities. When first aid is administered in the school this is done in the child's classroom and in the presence of other children.

Children will not travel along in staff teachers cars. Furthermore, children are not allowed to be collected by somebody unknown to the staff.

(h) Recruitment and selection of staff

The recruitment and selection of staff will be carefully considered. All applications will supply personal details, a resume of work experience and

references to the school and garda vetting will always be sought. All volunteers working in the school will do so under the guidance of and in the presence of, the teachers.

(i) Internet Safety

Children are adequately supervised on the internet in school. The school's Acceptable Use Policy outlines the decisions the school has taken in relation to technology.

Children in our school have access to the school phone and may contact parents/guardians at any time with the permission of the teacher. Therefore school policy forbids pupils from bringing mobile phones and all electronic devices into school. This policy extends to all school outings.

(Please refer to Mobile Phone Policy for full details)

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.

Links to other policy/planning areas:

Prevention: SPHE curriculum, Strand Unit on 'Safety and Protection'
The School Code of Discipline.

Procedures: Anti-Bullying Policy.
Health and Safety Statement.

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

Each of these stages is developed in Children First (2011) Pages 10 and 11.

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 practicable, due consideration is given, having regard to age and understanding, to the child's wishes.

Direction for Personnel following a Disclosure:

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. (Facts recorded only, refrain from forming opinions)
- Report as soon as possible after the disclosure to aid accuracy.
- Keep all records in a safe place. Use reference number, not child's name, as identification.
- Do not make enquiries of parents/guardians. This type of investigative work is left to the authorities such as HSE or Gardaí.

- Inform the DLP – if the DLP decides that a referral is not warranted, then a clear written statement should be given to the employee who made the report stating the reasons why further action is not being taken by the DLP . Employee is advised that she is free to consult with or report to the HSE if she still has concerns. The provisions of the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 apply once they communicate “reasonably and in good faith”.
- DLP may request advice from the HSE anonymously. At this enquiry stage, DLP is not obliged to give details of case. Depending on advice of HSE, the DLP must act accordingly.

Confidentiality is vital – all information is disclosed on a “need to know” basis only.

If the reporting person or member of the school staff and the DLP are satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion/allegation the procedures for reporting as laid out in ‘Children First’ – Section 3 pg 13/14 will be adhered to (2011).

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 is to be taken for the safety of the child in which case the Chairperson may be informed after the report has been submitted.

Any Professional who suspects child abuse should inform parents/carers if a report is to be submitted to the Health Board or An Garda Síochána unless doing so is likely to endanger the child.

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 should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending HSE intervention.

Allegation Against School Employees

The most important consideration for the Chairperson, Board of Management or the DLP is the safety and protection of the child. However, employees also have a right to protection against claims which are false or malicious.

As employers, the Board of Management should always seek legal advice as the circumstances can vary from one case to another.

There are two procedures to be followed:

- i. The Reporting Procedure.
- ii. The Procedure for dealing with the Employee.

The DLP has responsibility for reporting the matter to the Health Board. The Chairperson, Board of Management has responsibility, acting in consultation with his/her Board, for addressing the employment issues. If the allegation is against the DLP, the Chairperson of the Board of Management will assume the responsibility for reporting the matter to the HSE.

Reporting

When an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee, the DLP should immediately act in accordance with the procedures outlined in "Child Protection".

A written statement of the allegation should be sought from the person/agency making the report. The DLP should always inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

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 with the DLP. The procedures outlined will then be followed.

The chairperson of the Board and DLP should 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 HSE or Gardaí has been/will be/must be/should be 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 Board of Management within a specified period and told that this may be passed to the Gardaí, HSE 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 should take any necessary protective measures. These measures should be proportionate to the level of risk and should not unreasonably penalise the employee in any way unless to protect the child.

If the nature of the allegations warrants immediate action in the Chairperson's opinion, the Board of Management should be convened to consider the matter. The Board will consider feedback if any has been received from the HSE, Gardaí or relevant source. This may result in the Board of Management directing that the employee absent him/herself from the school forthwith while the matter is being investigated (Administrative Leave). When the Board of Management is unsure as to whether this should occur, advice should be sought

from the Gardaí and/or the Child Care Manager of the HSE and the legal advisers of the Board of Management.

Administrative Leave

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 will pay and not suspension and would not imply any degree of guilt. The DES should be immediately informed.

Board of Management

The Chairperson should inform the Board of Management of all the details and remind the members of their serious responsibility to maintain strict confidentiality on all matters relating to the issue and the principles of due process and natural justice.

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This Policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____

Signed: _____ Signed: _____

Chairperson

Principal

Date: _____ Date: _____

Date of next Review: _____