

**Scoil Naomh Bríde,
Baile on Bhóthair,
Áth Troim,
Co. na Mí.**



**St. Brigid's N.S.,
Boardsmill,
Trim,
Co. Meath.**

Telephone/Fax: 046 9546358

Email: boardsmillns@yahoo.ie

Roll Number: 17947K

Child Protection Policy of Scoil Naomh Bríde

The Board of Management of Scoil Naomh Bríde 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. This document is a response to recent changes in legislation and takes account of the provisions of each of the following pieces of legislation

- Freedom of Information Act 1997
- The Education Act 1998
- The Child Welfare Act 2000
- Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011.

The new procedures are based on the recently published *Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011*. 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 Naomh Bríde 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 **James Battersby (Principal)**
3. The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is **Eileen Maguire (Deputy Principal)**
4. Scoil Naomh Bríde will adhere to the following principles of best practice in child protection and welfare through its policies, practices and activities; The school will
 - recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations;
 - fully co-operate 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 Board has also ensured the following;

- the necessary policies (the Child Protection Policy, the Code of Behaviour Policy, Anti-bullying Policy and the Supervision Policy) are in place.
- All staff have received copies of and have discussed the Child Protection Guidelines and are aware of the correct procedures to be followed if reporting a concern.
- Child Protection issues are on the agenda of and are raised at every Board of Management meeting.
- Child Protection issues are also on the agenda of every staff meeting.
- A review of the Child Protection Policy is conducted annually by the Board.
- School personnel will be notified that the annual review has taken place and written notification that the review has been undertaken will be provided to the Parents Association.
- A copy of the school's child protection policy, which includes the names of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Deputy DLP, will be made available to all school personnel and the Parents' Association and is readily accessible to parents on request.
- The name of the DLP and other relevant support services are displayed in a prominent position near the main entrance to the school.
- A letter from the Principal will be sent to all parents/guardians at the start of the school year informing them that Scoil Naomh Bríde fully adapts the National Guidelines for the Protection of Children.

6. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

7. This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year.

Categories of Child Abuse

All school personnel should be familiar with signs and behaviours that may be indicative of child abuse. Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time.

1. **Neglect;** Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, and/or medical care. Harm can be defined as the ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Whether it is significant is determined by the child's health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a child of similar age. Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point. For example, a child who suffers a series of minor injuries may not be having his or her needs met in terms of supervision and safety. A child whose height or weight is significantly below average may be being deprived of adequate nutrition. A child who consistently misses school may be being deprived of intellectual stimulation. The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her wellbeing and/or development are severely affected.
2. **Emotional Abuse;** Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a parent/carer and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's developmental need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms. Examples of emotional abuse of children include:

(a) the imposition of negative attributes on a child, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;

(b) conditional parenting in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviours or actions;

- (c) emotional unavailability of the child's parent/carer;
- (d) unresponsiveness of parent/carer and/or inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of the child;
- (e) premature imposition of responsibility on the child;
- (f) unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the child's capacity to understand something or to behave and control himself or herself in a certain way;
- (g) under- or over-protection of the child;
- (h) failure to show interest in, or provide age-appropriate opportunities for the child's cognitive and emotional development;
- (i) use of unreasonable or over-harsh disciplinary measures;
- (j) exposure to domestic violence;
- (k) exposure to inappropriate or abusive material through new technology.

Emotional abuse can be manifested in terms of the child's behavioural, cognitive, affective or physical functioning. Examples of these include insecure attachment, non-organic failure to thrive, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, and oppositional behaviour. The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.

3. **Physical Abuse;** Physical abuse of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction, or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents. Physical abuse can involve: severe physical punishment; beating, slapping, hitting or kicking; pushing, shaking or throwing; pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling; terrorising with threats; observing violence; use of excessive force in handling; deliberate poisoning; suffocation; fabricated/induced illness; allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.
4. **Sexual Abuse;** Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others. Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:

- (a) exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of the child;
- (b) intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;
- (c) masturbation in the presence of the child or the involvement of the child in an act of masturbation;
- (d) sexual intercourse with the child whether oral, vaginal, or anal;
- (e) sexual exploitation of a child includes inciting, encouraging propositioning, requiring or permitting a child to solicit for, or to engage in, prostitution or other sexual acts. Sexual exploitation also occurs when a child is involved in the exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, video tape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of the image by computer or other means. It may also include showing sexually explicit material to children which is often a feature of the "grooming" process by perpetrators of abuse;
- (f) consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person. In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that, for the purposes of the criminal law, the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for boys and girls. An Garda Síochána will deal with the criminal aspects of the case under the relevant legislation.

It should be noted that the definition of child sexual abuse presented in this section is not a legal definition and is not intended to be a description of the criminal offence of sexual assault. In all cases where a school becomes aware of underage sexual intercourse the school should take appropriate steps to inform the child's parents. Cases of underage pregnancy/sexual activity may be indicative of child abuse. If such concerns exist the Designated Liaison Person for the school should seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Services.

Further examples of forms of Neglect, Emotional abuse, Physical abuse and Sexual abuse can be found in Appendix 3 of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary schools and Children First, National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

The following practices will be adopted in Scoil Naomh Bríde:

Curricular;

Curricular policies e.g. S.P.H.E., Religion, English etc. that contribute to developing awareness of and that are relevant to the prevention of child abuse and neglect have been developed in the school. The Stay Safe programme is fully implemented using the Walk Tall and RSE resource materials. The Stay safe programme is the primary resource used in Scoil Naomh Bríde to educate the children on 'abuse prevention'. An RSE talk for children of 6th class and their parents is held annually in the school. During each term two designated weeks are selected for Anti-bullying initiatives and Stay Safe initiatives across the whole school.

Physical Contact:

Physical contact between staff of the school and students should be in response to the needs of the student and not the needs of the staff member. While 'physical contact' may be used to comfort, reassure or assist a student, cognisance should be taken of the following factors in determining its appropriateness;

- (i) Is it acceptable to the child?
- (ii) Is it open and not secretive?
- (iii) The age and developmental stage of the child.

It is strongly advised that staff should avoid doing anything of a personal nature for students that they can do for themselves.

Visitors/Guest Speakers:

Visitors/Guest Speakers should not be left alone with students. The school has a responsibility to check out the credentials of all visitors/guest speakers and to ensure that the materials they are sharing with the students is age appropriate.

Children with intimate care needs:

In circumstances where a pupil of the school requires assistance with toileting or has intimate care needs, a meeting will be convened with the parents/guardians of this student. The purpose of this meeting will be to ascertain the 'specific' needs of the pupil and what the school can do to meet such needs. The staff involved in the provision of such care will be identified and procedures agreed [in writing] for effecting same. (see Appendix 10). It is recommended that two members of staff are present to assist students with toileting/intimate care needs. Any deviation from agreed procedure will be recorded and notified to the DLP and the Parents/Guardians. Cognisance will be taken of the age, gender and developmental stage of the student when devising a plan to address such needs.

Toileting Accidents:

Clean underwear and replacement clothing [school tracksuits/uniforms] will be kept at the school. Where a toileting accident occurs, the student(s) will be offered a replacement tracksuit and clean underwear. In circumstances where a student is unable to 'clean' and/or 'change' themselves, the school will contact his/her parent/guardian. In the event that contact cannot be made with a parent/guardian, two members of staff familiar with the student will facilitate. A written record of all such incidents will be maintained on the student's file.

One to One teaching:

In some circumstances 'One to One Teaching' is recommended in the best interest of the student. Every effort will be made by the Board of Management to ensure that such teaching takes place in an 'open' environment. Parents/guardians of the students recommended for 'one to one teaching' will be informed and their consent sought.

Changing for Games/PE/Swimming/Activities:

Students will be expected to undress and dress for these activities without the assistance of a staff member. Where assistance is required, it will take place in communal areas and with the consent of parents/guardians. Under no circumstances will a staff member or volunteer be expected or allowed to dress/undress a student in a cubicle/private area. Staff should not be left on their own with a child in this circumstance. In such situations where privacy is requested, parents/guardians will be consulted and asked to provide such assistance.

Groups using school building outside of school hours for activities involving children:

Please see appendix 7 regarding the responsibilities of groups using the school for non-related school activities.

Out of school activities [school tours, school matches etc.]:

For the majority of out of school activities the Board of Management will engage independent contractors to provide transport for all such activities that require same. Supervision will be provided for students attending such activities. However, for some activities e.g. trips to the local church for mass etc, parents will be asked to provide assistance.

Internet/Mobile Phone Use:

Every effort will be made by staff to ensure that access to and use of ICT equipment within school will be for age appropriate educational use for staff and students.

Substitute Teachers / Volunteers / Student's on Work Placement:

Persons engaged by the school in a voluntary capacity to assist with activities both in and out of the classroom will be required to assist under the direction of a staff member and sign a statutory declaration form confirming that they pose no risk to students and that they consent to the Board of Management, it's servants or agents consulting with An Garda Síochána to verify same. Substitute teachers working in the school are Garda Vetted and have completed Statutory Declaration forms.

Every effort will be made by staff members to adhere to best practice. In the event of an emergency, where this may not be possible or practicable, a written record of the incident will be maintained at the school office detailing the procedures followed. The DLP and parents/guardians will be informed accordingly.

