

Scoil Mobhí

Child Protection Policy

This policy document is set out in accordance with the ethos and mission statement of Scoil Mobhí and in response to “Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011” as issued by the Department of Health and Children and the revised “Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools” as issued by the Department of Education and Science.

Procedures for Good Practice

The Scoil Mobhí Child Protection Policy has been discussed and agreed with all staff of Scoil Mobhí, teachers, SNAs, Ancillary, secretarial, caretaker, the Board of Management and the members of the Comhar – the parent association in the school. An individual copy of this policy document and the appended section from the Department of Education and Skills Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures 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.

Duty of Care

Parents/Carers have primary responsibility for the care and protection of their children. The school community also has a responsibility for the welfare and protection of children while in its care. All school personnel should be alert to the possibility of child abuse. They need to be aware of their obligation to report any reasonable concerns or suspicions to the principal in Scoil Mobhí who is the Designated Liaison Person (DLP).

Aims

This policy aims to

- Create a safe, trusting, responsive and caring environment by encouraging children to communicate with staff.
- 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. Please refer to Page 5.
- Ensure that all staff members are aware of and familiar with the ‘Children First – National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011’ 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.

Principles for Best Practice in Child Protection

- The principles that should inform best practice in child protection include the following:
- The welfare of children is of primary importance
- A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights / needs of parents /carers and families; but where there is conflict the child's welfare must come first.
- Children have the right to be heard and taken seriously
- Early intervention and support should be available to promote the welfare of children and families, particularly where they are vulnerable or at risk of not receiving adequate care or protection.
- Parents/Carers have a right to respect and should be consulted and involved in matters which concern their family.
- The criminal dimension of any action cannot be ignored.
- Effective prevention, detection and treatment of child abuse require a coordinated multi-disciplinary approach.

Guidelines for Staff in Scoil Mobhí

- Physical punishment of students is not permitted under any circumstances. See below.
- School personnel must not engage in nor tolerate any behaviour that is abusive towards students, either verbally or psychologically.
- When a one-to-one meeting with a student is considered appropriate, it should take place in a room with the door left open or in a room with easy visibility from outside the door.
- It is not recommended that staff give lifts in their cars to individual students. There should be a minimum of three people present for the entire journey.
- Photographs, images or personal details of children must never be published, unless the school consent form has been signed.

Physical Abuse

- Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury that causes harm to a child including:
- Shaking
- Use of excessive force in handling
- Deliberate poisoning
- Suffocation
- Munchausen's Syndrome by proxy (where parents fabricate stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness)
- Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child

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, including for example:
- Exposure of sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification.
- Masturbation in the presence of a child or involvement of the child in the act of masturbation.
- Sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal
- Sexual exploitation of a child
- Consensual sexual activity between an adult and a child under 17 years.

Recognition of Child Abuse

The recognition of abuse normally runs along three stages:

Considering the possibility – if a child appears to have suffered an inexplicable and suspicious looking injury, seems distressed without obvious reason, displays unusual behavioural problems or appears fearful in the company of some people.

Observing signs of abuse – a cluster or pattern of signs is the most reliable indicator of abuse. Children may make direct or indirect disclosures, which should always be taken seriously. Play situations such as drawing or story telling may reveal significant information. Indications of harm must always be considered in relation to the child's social and family background and it is always important to always be open to alternative explanations.

Recording of information – Observations will be recorded and will include dates, times, names, locations, context and any other information which could be considered relevant or which facilitate assessment/investigation.

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 school's 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, every second year in accordance with the SPHE two-year cycle plan.

Staff will make every effort to ensure that the message of the programme is reinforced whenever possible. Although Scoil Mobhí is a Gaelscoil, we adopt a bilingual approach in our teaching of this programme. We will use the 'Stay Safe' pack for children with learning difficulties, should this be required. Resource teachers SNAs will support the teaching of this programme in their work. Information evenings are held for the parents.

Reporting Child Protection Concerns

As teachers/SNAs are the main caregivers outside the family with regular contact with children in the school setting, teachers are particularly well placed to observe and monitor children for signs of abuse. They have a general duty of care to ensure that arrangements are in place to protect children and young people from harm. In this regard the staff facilitates the children in developing their self-esteem, confidence, independence of thought and necessary skills to cope with possible threats to their personal safety both within and outside the school.

Reasonable concerns or suspicions of child abuse will be reported to the DLP.

While the basis for concern must be established as comprehensively as possible, the following advice is offered to school personnel to whom a child makes a disclosure of abuse:

- Listen to the child
- Do not ask leading questions nor 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.

This information should then be reported to the DLP. The record of the discussions should be given to and retained by the DLP.

Keeping track of records

When child abuse is suspected, it is essential to have a record of all information available. Staff should note carefully what they have observed and when they observed it. Signs of physical injury should be described in detail and, if appropriate sketched. Any comment by the child concerned, or by any other person about how the injury occurred should be recorded, preferably quoting the words actually used, as soon as possible after the comment has been made. All records so created should be regarded as highly confidential and retained in a secure location by the DLP.

It is possible that school personnel may subsequently be invited to attend a child protection conference by the appropriate health board.

Procedures to be followed when abuse is suspected.

If a staff member suspects abuse or if allegations are disclosed to a staff member they should bring these concerns immediately to the DLP.

If a staff member and the DLP are satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation the DLP should report the matter to the relevant health authority immediately.

If there are concerns but a lack of certainty as to whether the matter should be reported, the DLP should seek appropriate advice from the relevant authority. If advised that a referral should be made, the DLP should act on that advice.

If the DLP decides not to refer the concerns to the health authority, the staff member should be given a clear statement in writing as to the reasons why action is not being

taken. If the staff member remains concerned, she/he is free to consult with or report to the relevant health authority.

The staff and management of this school have agreed:

All concern/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.

Allegations or suspicion of child abuse by school employees

This section is intended to provide guidance to Boards of Management in situations where an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee.

If an allegation is made against a staff member, procedures as laid out in “Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011” will be followed.

The DES revised publication “*Child Protection: Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*” is available in Scoil Mobhí to assist the Board of Management in having due regard for both the rights and interests of children under their care and those of the employee against whom an allegation has been made. While the primary duty of care is to protect the children, school employees may be subject to erroneous or malicious allegations. Any allegation of abuse must be dealt with sensitively and the employee fairly treated. This includes the right not to be judged in advance of a full and fair enquiry.

Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse

The protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse reasonable and in good faith to designated officers of Health Boards or any member of the Gardaí. The act provides significant protection for employees who report child abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to and including dismissal.

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 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 development stage of the child

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

Two vetted 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 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. This record will be kept in the accident book.

(e)One-to-One teaching

One-to-one teaching is often 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 regularly 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. One-to-one rooms have a glass panel.

(f)Changing for Games/PE/Drama

Pupils will be expected to dress and undress themselves for games/PE/drama. Where assistance is needed this will be done in the communal areas and with the consent of the 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.

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 / practices / planning areas:

Prevention: SPHE curriculum, Strand Unit on ‘Safety and Protection’,
The school Code of Discipline

Procedures: Anti-Bullying Policy
Health and Safety Statement

Practice: Games, School Tours, Dancing

Review and Monitoring

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Board of Management on an annual basis and when the need arises. The board of management will ensure that adequate training and support is provided for all staff.

Policy adopted by the BOM on: **31 Bealtaine 2017**

Appendix 1:
Child Protection Policy of Scoil Mobhí (as per DES template)

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 Mobhí 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 Marcella Nic Niallaigh
3. The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Sinéad Ní Bhleithín
4. In its policies, practices and activities, Scoil Mobhí 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 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 of Management of Scoil Mobhí has the following policies practices and protocols in place which are of particular relevance to Child Protection: Code of Behaviour, Anti-bullying Policy, Pupil Attendance Strategy, Supervision of Pupils, Relationships and Sexuality Education, Acceptable Use Policy, Safety & Welfare, Garda Vetting.

6. This policy has been made available to school personnel and An Comhar 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.

7. 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 **31 Bealtaine 2017**

Signed: _____ Signed: _____
Chairperson of Board of Management Principal

Date: _____ Date: _____

Date of next review: **2018**

Appendix 2: Checklist for Annual Review of the Child Protection Policy

The Board of Management must undertake an annual review of its child protection policy and the following checklist shall be used for this purpose.

The checklist is designed as an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. Individual Boards of Management may wish to include other items in the checklist that are of particular relevance to the school in question.

As part of the overall review process, Boards of Management should also assess other school policies, practices and activities vis a vis their adherence to the principles of best practice in child protection and welfare as set out in the school's child protection policy.

	Yes/No
Has the Board formally adopted a child protection policy in accordance with the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	Yes
As part of the school's child protection policy, has the Board formally adopted, without modification, the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	Yes
Page 2 we have amended that photographs may not be taken unless the school consent form has been signed.	
Are there both a DLP and a Deputy DLP currently appointed?	Yes
Are the relevant contact details (HSE and An Garda Síochána) to hand?	Yes
Has the DLP attended available child protection training?	NO
Has the Deputy DLP attended available child protection training?	Yes in 2014/2015
Have any members of the Board attended child protection training?	Sr. Miriam
Has the school's child protection policy identified other school policies, practices and activities that are regarded as having particular child protection relevance?	Yes
Has the Board ensured that the Department's "Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools" are available to all school personnel?	Yes
Has the Board arrangements in place to communicate the school's child protection policy to new school personnel?	Yes
Is the Board satisfied that all school personnel have been made aware of their responsibilities under the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Yes Schools'?	Yes
Since the Board's last annual review, was the Board informed of any child protection reports made to the HSE/An Garda Síochána by the DLP?	Yes
Since the Board's last annual review, was the Board informed of any cases where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report to the HSE was made?	Yes
Is the Board satisfied that the child protection procedures in relation to the making of reports to the HSE/ An Garda Síochána were appropriately followed?	Yes
Were child protection matters reported to the Board appropriately recorded in the Board minutes?	Yes
Is the Board satisfied that all records relating to child protection are appropriately filed and stored securely?	Yes
Has the Board ensured that the Parents' Association (if any), has been provided with the school's child protection policy?	Yes
Has the Board ensured that the school's child protection policy is available to parents on request?	Yes
Has the Board ensured that the Stay Safe programme is implemented in full in the school? (applies to primary schools)	Yes
Has the Board ensured that the SPHE curriculum is implemented in full in the school?	Yes

Is the Board satisfied that the Department's requirements for Garda Vetting have been met in respect of all school personnel (employees and volunteers)?	Yes
Is the Board satisfied that the Department's requirements in relation to the provision of a child protection related statutory declaration and associated form of undertaking have been met in respect of persons appointed to teaching and non-teaching positions?	To be verified with new Garda Vetting Requirements
Is the Board satisfied that, from a child protection perspective, thorough recruitment and selection procedures are applied by the school in relation to all school personnel (employees and volunteers)?	Yes
Is the Board satisfied that the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools' are being fully and adequately implemented by the school?	Yes
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's child protection policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	No
Has the Board put in place an action plan containing appropriate timelines to address those aspects of the school's child protection policy and/or its implementation that have been identified as requiring further improvement ?	N/A
Has the Board ensured that any areas for improvement that that were identified in any previous review of the school's child protection policy have been adequately addressed?	N/A

Signed _____ Date _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____ Date _____
Principal

Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the child protection policy
To: _____

The Board of Management of Scoil Mobhí wishes to inform you that:

- The Board of Management's annual review of the school's child protection policy was completed at the Board meeting of **31 Bealtaine 2017**
- This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in Appendix 2 of the Department's 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'

Signed _____ Date _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____ Date _____
Principal

Appendix 3: Protocol authorising immediate action

The following protocol authorises immediate action under section 5.2 of the ‘Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools’.

Primary

In the context of these procedures, where circumstances warrant it, as a precautionary measure in order to protect the children in the school and in accordance with the principles of natural justice and the presumption of innocence, the chairperson of the Board of Management is authorised by the school authority to direct an employee to immediately absent himself/herself from the school without loss of pay until the matter has been considered by the employer.

The employee will be invited to a meeting with the chairperson, the purpose of which is to inform the employee of the allegation and the action being taken. The employee may be accompanied by an appropriate person of his or her choice and will be so advised.

In any event, the employee will also be advised of the matter, in writing.

Post-Primary

(A) In the context of these procedures, where circumstances warrant it, as a precautionary measure in order to protect the children in the school and in accordance with the principles of natural justice and the presumption of innocence, the school principal is authorised by the school management authority to direct an employee to immediately absent himself/herself from the school without loss of pay until the matter has been considered by the employer.

The employee will be invited to a meeting with the principal, the purpose of which is to inform the employee of the allegation and the action being taken. The employee may be accompanied by an appropriate person of his or her choice and will be so advised.

In any event, the employee will also be advised of the matter, in writing.

(B) In the case of a school or college under the aegis of a VEC, the decision to absent an employee in the circumstances outlined at (A) above will be taken by the CEO of the VEC or a person to whom this authority has been delegated.

Signed _____ Date _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Aguisín 3: Prótacál lena dtugtar údarás le beart láithreach

Tugtar údarás leis an bprótacál seo a leanas do bheart láithreach a dhéanamh faoi alt 5.2 sna 'Nósanna Imeachta maidir le Caomhnú Leanaí i mBunscoileanna agus i Scoileanna Iarbhunscoile'.

Bunscoileanna

I gcomhthéacs na nósanna imeachta seo, nuair atá cúis mhaith leis i gcúinsí an cháis, tá d'údarás ag cathaoirleach an Bhoird Bainistíochta ó údarás na scoile, mar bheart réamhchúraim d'fhonn leanaí na scoile a chaomhnú agus de réir phrionabail an cheartais aiceanta agus toimhde na neamhchiontachta, ordú d'fhostaí fanacht ón am sin díreach as láthair na scoile gan aon chailteanas pá go dtí go mbíonn an cheist measta ag an bhfostóir.

Tabharfar cuireadh don fhostaí teacht chuig cruinniú leis an gcathaoirleach, arb é cuspóir a bheith leis an fostaí a chur ar an eolas faoin líomhain agus faoin mbeart atá á dhéanamh. Is féidir leis an bhfostaí duine cuí dá rogha féin a bheith ina c(h)uideachta agus cuirfear sin in iúl dó nó di.

Déanfar, ar aon chuma, an fostaí a chur ar an eolas faoin gcás i scríbhinn chomh maith.

Scoileanna Iarbhunscoile

- (A) I gcomhthéacs na nósanna imeachta seo, nuair atá cúis mhaith leis i gcúinsí an cháis, tá d'údarás ag príomhoide na scoile ó údarás bainistíochta na scoile, mar bheart réamhchúraim d'fhonn leanaí na scoile a chaomhnú agus de réir phrionabail an cheartais aiceanta agus toimhde na neamhchiontachta, ordú d'fhostaí fanacht ón am sin díreach as láthair na scoile gan aon chailteanas pá go dtí go mbíonn an cheist measta ag an bhfostóir.

Tabharfar cuireadh don fhostaí teacht chuig cruinniú leis an bpríomhoide, arb é cuspóir a bheith leis an fostaí a chur ar an eolas faoin líomhain agus faoin mbeart atá á dhéanamh. Is féidir leis an bhfostaí duine cuí dá rogha féin a bheith ina c(h)uideachta agus cuirfear sin in iúl dó nó di.

Déanfar, ar aon chuma, an fostaí a chur ar an eolas faoin gcás i scríbhinn chomh maith.

- (B) Maidir le scoil nó coláiste atá faoi choimirce Choiste Gairmoideachais, is é Príomhfheidhmeannach an Choiste Gairmoideachais nó duine dá dtarmlichtear údarás chuige sin a dhéanamh an socrú maidir le hordú d'fhostaí imeacht agus fanacht as láthair i gcás mar a leagtar amach faoi (A) thuas.

Sínithe _____ Dáta _____
Cathaoirleach an Bhoird Bainistíochta