**Child Protection Policy**

**Introductory Statement**

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 St. Joseph’s N.S. has agreed the following child protection policy:

1. The Board of Management has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the Departments Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools as part of this overall child protection policy.
2. The Designated Liaison Person **(DLP)** is Mr Sé McCarthy **(Principal).**
3. The Deputy Liaison Person **(Deputy DLP)** is Mrs Mary Lynn **(Deputy Principal).**
4. In its policies , practices and activities, St. Joseph’s N.S. 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
* Fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters

The staff, parents and management of St. Joseph’s N.S. have developed and agreed this policy in line with the current recommendations and guidelines relating to child abuse prevention and child protection guidelines.

This policy addresses the responsibilities of the school in the following areas:-

1. Prevention – curriculum provision
2. Procedures – procedures for dealing with concerns / disclosures
3. Practice – best practice in child protection

An individual copy of this policy document and the appended section from the Department of Education and Science Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures will be made available to all staff.

It is incumbent on all staff to familiarise themselves with ‘Children First’ and the DES child protection guidelines and procedures.

Schools have an obligation to provide students with the highest possible standard of care in order to promote their well-being and protect them from harm. School personnel are especially well placed to observe changes in behaviour, failure to develop or outward signs of abuse in children.

**Aims**

**This policy aims to:-**

* Create a safe, trusting, responsive and caring environment
* 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
* Ensure that all staff members 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.
* Provide for on going training in this and related areas for all school staff

**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 schools’ 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.

The formal lessons of the programme will be taught in their entirety every year.

Staff will make every effort to ensure that the messages of the programme are reinforced whenever possible.

**Procedures**

All Staff (Teachers, SNAs, Ancillary, Secretarial, Caretaking etc.) in this school will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in ‘Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children” (2011) and the Department of Education and Skills document, ‘Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools’ (2011).

**The Staff and Management of this school have agreed:**

* 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.

This report will be recorded in the Child Protection Book stored in the Principal’s office

* A strict adherence to maintain confidentiality – information regarding concerns or disclosures of abuse should only be given on a ‘need to know’ basis.
* Recognising that the safety and well being of children attending the school is a priority, the Board undertakes to include Child Protection & Health & Safety matters as items on the agenda of all Board meetings forthwith.
* Child Protection matters will be included automatically on the agenda of all staff meetings.
* The name of the DLP must be displayed in a prominent position near the entrance to the school.
* Any disclosures made to the relevant authorities will be reported at the subsequent Board of Management meeting including not only referrals, but including incidents where advice was sought.
* The Board will ensure that appropriate and on-going training as necessary will be available for DLP and the DDLP.
* The board fully endorses arrangements for the vetting of teaching and non-teaching staff as outlined in Circular 0094/2006, June 2006, for the Department of Education & Skills.
* The Board recognisees that it has two duties of care. The primary duty is the protection, safety and welfare of the children attending St. Joseph’s N.S. The Board as an employer also has duties and responsibilities towards its employees.
* As an employer, the Board will seek legal advice if an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee.
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* The Board will adhere to the protocol outlined in Ch.5 (see Appendix) Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse of School Employees, in “Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools”. (2011) to authorise any actions required to protect the children in its care. The Board notes that school employees may be subject to erroneous or malicious allegations. Any allegation of abuse should be dealt with sensitively. The employee should be treated fairly which includes the right not to be judged in advance of a full and fair enquiry. The Board accepts that the principles of natural justice and fair procedures must be adhered to.
* The Board believes that the academic, personal and social development of children flourishes in a culture where good relationships are encouraged, people feel valued and respected and appropriate support is available for those in difficulty.
* The Board is committed to the maintenance of the environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to express themselves and are listened to. All children in the school will be made aware that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried. In addition, opportunities will be included in the curriculum for children to develop the skills they need to keep them safe.
* This policy statement regarding Child Protection at St. Joseph’s N.S. applies to all staff, members of the Board of Management, volunteers and contractors working in the school.

This policy statement will be subject to review at the start of each academic year forthwith.

**Practice:**

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 staffs have agreed that the following practices be adopted.

1. **Physical Contact**

Physical contact between school personnel and the child should always be in response to the need 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

Personnel should refer to our school’s physical intervention policy should a child become a danger to him/herself or to others, or in the case of damage being done to property.

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

1. **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.

1. **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 notified to the DLP and the parents/guardians 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 member involved is absent. A written copy of what has been agreed will be made and kept in the child’s file.

1. Two members of staff will be present when dealing with intimate care/toileting needs. Any deviation from the agreed procedure will be recorded.
2. **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.

1. **One to One teaching:**

It is the policy in this school that 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 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.

1. **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. 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.

**This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 7/2/2012**