

## **Child Protection Policy St. Columbanus N.S**

### **Introductory Statement**

The Board of Management, staff and parents of St. Columbanus 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:-

- a) Prevention – curriculum provision
- b) Procedures - procedures for dealing with concerns / disclosures
- c) 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.

### **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 ongoing training in this and related areas for all school staff
- To put in place for all school personnel clear procedures for dealing with suspicions and allegations of abuse

### **Prevention – Curriculum Provision**

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. The 5 formal lessons of the programme will be taught in their entirety every second year in accordance with the SPHE two-year cycle plan.

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' will be provided.

The RSE Programme is taught as part of the SPHE curriculum under the strand units 'Myself', 'Growing and Changing' and 'Taking Care of my Body'. The content objectives will be taught every second year by a visiting teacher. As with the Stay Safe Programme,

parents/guardians are informed on enrolment as to what the programme entails and have the possibility of opting their child out of the programme

### **Procedures: Dealing with concerns/ disclosures**

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' and the Department of Education and Science document, 'Child Protection, Guidelines and Procedures'. (See attached Appendix, pages 5 to 20 from the above DES guidelines).

The Board of Management of this school has appointed Mrs Carmel Murphy as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Ms. Aoife Reddington as the deputy DLP.

The staff and management of this school have agreed the following:

- 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.
- Confidentiality will be strictly maintained. Information regarding concerns or disclosures of abuse should only be given to others on a 'need to know' basis.
- Each teacher will be provided with a folder containing a standard recording sheet to be kept in a secure location and used when appropriate.
- Only the child's registration number will be used when recording an incident.

### **Practice:**

The following areas have been considered by the Board of Management and staff of this school as areas of specific concern in relation to child protection. Following discussion and consultation it has been 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 its 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 the children 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 the pupil (if appropriate). 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 members involved are absent. A written copy of what has been agreed 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 a toileting accident, 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

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.

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.

g) Recruitment and selection of staff

The recruitment and selection of staff is crucial to ensuring that those working with the children in the school are safe adults insofar as this can be determined. Correct procedures will be followed in relation to advertising, interviewing and the selection of staff, and other practices will also be considered

- All applications should be asked to supply in writing information which includes appropriate personal details, a résumé of past and current work/volunteering experience, indicating relevant qualification or skills acquired.
- At least two written references-verifications of which shall be sought.
- Garda vetting will also be sought.

#### h) Supervision of Children

Children are adequately supervised at all times during school hours. It is expected that a child will never be in the school building alone with a teacher. Should any incidents/accidents take place while children are under the supervision of school staff, these will be adequately recorded. First Aid will always be administered in public place, or in the presence of other adults/children. Children will never travel alone in a staff member's car. Children will not be allowed to be collected by someone unknown to the staff. Where schools are aware of a court order being in place which prevents someone from having access to a child, a copy of that order should be requested by the school. In the event of the parents/guardians non compliance with the court order, the Garda should be summoned to the school to enforce it.

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/guardians

#### **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.

Practice: P.E Policy / +Swimming Policy  
School Tours / Outings  
Internet usage Policy  
Visitors to schools Policy

#### **Review and Monitoring**

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

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management in September 2020 and reviewed in October 2021 and November 2022 and November 2023



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Chairperson: Joe Kenny

To be reviewed in November 2024