

SACRED HEART B.N.S.



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

REVIEW DATE: MARCH 2017

Child Protection Policy March 2022

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.

These procedures are based on the recently published *Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011*, and *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Dept. of Education & Skills, 2011)*

References:

- *Children First* (Dept. of Children and Youth Affairs 2011)
- Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (Dept. of Education & Skills, 2011).

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. Therefore, in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills and Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, the Board of Management of Sacred Heart B.N.S. has agreed the following child protection policy.

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. It was ratified at a meeting of the Board of Management on March 24th 2022

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Niall Carty (Principal).

The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Paul Caffrey (Deputy Principal).

In its policies, practices and activities, Sacred Heart B.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: We will:

- 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.

Certain policies such as our Code of Behaviour, Anti-bullying Policy, Pupil Attendance Policy and the Supervision of Pupils' Guidelines 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.

Accordingly, the principles of best practice in child protection and welfare are recognised and adopted in all aspects of school life at the Sacred Heart B.N.S. In addition to policies listed in the paragraph above, the following policies and programmes support these child protection principles and practices: Stay Safe Programme, SPHE Policy, RE Policy, RSE Programmes, Internet Safety and Acceptable Use Policy, ICT Policies, Intimate Care Policy, Walk Tall Programme and the 'Aladdin' system.

This policy has been made available to school personnel and is readily accessible to parents on request. It is available on our school website (<http://www.sacredheartballygall.ie>). A copy of this policy will be made available to the DES and the patron if requested.

Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

The DLP in Sacred Heart B.N.S. is the Principal, Niall Carty; this appointment has been ratified by the Board of Management. The Deputy DLP is Paul Caffrey; this appointment has also been ratified by the Board of Management.

The DLP has specific responsibility for child protection and will represent the school in all correspondence 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 (DES Procedures 3:2).

The DLP acts in cases where there are reasonable grounds for suspicion or where an allegation has been made.

Confidentiality

All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse should only be shared on a 'need to know' basis in the interests of the child. The giving of information to those who need to have that information is not a breach of confidentiality. This procedure exists for the protection of a child who may have been or has been abused. The DLP who is submitting a report to the HSE or An Garda Síochána should inform a parent/guardian, unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or place that child at further risk. A decision not to inform a parent/guardian should be briefly recorded together with the reasons for not doing so.

In emergency situations, where the HSE cannot be contacted, and the child appears to be at immediate and serious risk, An Garda Síochána should be contacted immediately. A child should not be left in a dangerous situation pending HSE intervention.

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 'reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of the HSE or any member of an Garda Síochána (DES Procedures 1:10).

Qualified Privilege

People making a report to the DLP in good faith have 'qualified privilege' under common law. Reports made to the HSE may be subject to provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, 1997. This act enables members of the public to obtain access to personal information relating to them which is in the possession of public bodies. However, the act also provides that public bodies may refuse access to information obtained by them in confidence (DES Procedures 1:11).

Definition and Recognition of Child Abuse

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types:

- Neglect
- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse

Each of these categories is defined in full in *Children First* but for the purpose of this policy attention is drawn to the stated definition of '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 medical care.

Guidelines for Recognition of Child Abuse

A list of child abuse indicators is contained in *Children First*, Chapter 2. This policy draws particular attention to 'persistent evidence' of neglect, including indicators such as no lunch, lack of uniform, no homework, poor attendance, persistent health problems, lack of sleep, inappropriate television viewing late at night and other evidence that would indicate lack of supervision in the home. 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:

1. Considering the possibility.
2. Looking out for signs of abuse.
3. Recording of information.

Each of these stages is developed in *Children First 2:2*.

Handling Disclosures from Children

DES Procedures 3:5 give comprehensive details of how disclosures should be approached. Staffs are advised to deal with each situation sensitively, reassure the child but not to make promises that cannot be fulfilled.

The adult should not ask leading questions or make suggestions. They should explain that further help may have to be sought. The discussion should then be recorded accurately. The record should include reference to what was observed with sketches of physical injury where necessary. It should also record when the alleged incident took place. Records should be kept in a secure place. The information should then be conveyed to the school DLP.

If the reporting person and the DLP are satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion/allegation, the procedures outlined in *Children First* must be adhered to. Standardised reporting forms should be used (DES Procedures, Appendix 4). The content of the report should follow the guidance in *Children First*.

Allegations or Suspicions in relation to School Employees (DES Procedures, Chapter 5)

The Chairperson and the DLP are primarily concerned with the protection of the children in their care. However, employees must be protected against false and malicious claims. Legal advice should be sought by the board in relation to the employee. If the allegation is against the DLP, the Chairperson of the BOM 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 act in accordance with the procedures outlined in *Children First*. A written statement of the allegation should be sought from the person/agency making the report. A parent/guardian may make a statement on behalf of a child. The DLP should always inform the Chairperson of the BOM and is responsible for liaising with the HSE. The Chairperson assumes responsibility for communicating with the employee.

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 employee should be informed by the Chairperson (i.e.: the Employer):

- 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 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 BOM within a specified period and told that this may be passed to the Gardaí, HSE and legal advisers.

The Chairperson must take the necessary steps to protect the child and may consult the BOM in this matter. The BOM may direct that the employee take administrative leave with pay and avoid suspension, thus removing any implication of guilt. The DES should be immediately informed.

School Measures Taken to Protect the Children in Our Care

There are a number of areas where common sense in our school should prevail in order to protect the children in the school and the staff who care for them. In relation to this, certain points should be noted:

1. Sacred Heart B.N.S. fully implements the Stay Safe programme every year.
2. 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 is readily accessible to parents on our website.
3. The name of the DLP and DDLP are displayed in a prominent position near the main entrance to the school.
4. In addition to informing the school authority of those cases where a report involving a child in the school has been submitted to the HSE, the DLP shall also inform the school authority of cases where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report was made. At each meeting of the Board of Management, the agenda includes an item on Child Protection; the Principal shall inform the Board of the number of all such cases and this shall be recorded in the minutes of the board meeting.
5. Sacred Heart B.N.S. 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 at Appendix 1. The school will put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement which might be identified in the annual review. 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 school community, via the website. A record of the review and its outcome shall be made available, if requested, to the patron and the DES.
6. Staff who take classes swimming should make sure that there are two adults in attendance at all times. The dressing rooms and pool area should be well supervised.
7. Staff should not be alone in a classroom with one child or detain a child on their own after school. Some pupils with special educational needs are sanctioned resource hours and

assistance on an individual basis; staffs are mindful of this child protection policy when teaching these pupils and our support rooms have glass panels in the doors thus rendering the occupants visible at all times.

8. When possible children should work in groups.

9. Children with physical disabilities who may require assistance in toiletry matters will be aided by a Special Needs Assistant (if allocated by NCSE) who has met the necessary screening requirements when being employed by the school. See Intimate Care Policy. It should be noted that children with disabilities may be more at risk of abuse due to a number of reasons (DES Procedures 2:3). Parents, teachers and all staff involved in services for children with disabilities need to be familiar with the indicators of abuse and to be alert for signs of abuse.

Appendix 1: Checklist for Annual Review of the Child Protection Policy

The Board of Management shall 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. The Board of Management may wish to include other items in the checklist that are of particular relevance to our school and reserves the right to do so if/when the need occurs.

1.	Has the Board formally adopted a Child Protection Policy in accordance with the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	YES	NO
2.	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	NO
3.	Are there both a DLP and a Deputy DLP currently appointed?	YES	NO
4.	Are the relevant contact details (HSE and An Garda Síochána) to hand?	YES	NO
5.	Has the DLP attended available child protection training?	YES	NO
6.	Has the Deputy DLP attended available child protection training?	YES	NO
7.	Have any members of the Board attended child protection training?	YES	NO
8.	Has the school's Child Protection Policy identified other school policies, practices and activities that are regarded as having particular child protection relevance?	YES	NO
9.	Has the Board ensured that the Department's <i>Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools</i> are available to all school personnel?	YES	NO
10.	Does the Board have arrangements in place to communicate the school's Child Protection Policy to new school personnel?	YES	NO
11.	Is the Board satisfied that all school personnel have been made aware of their responsibilities under the <i>Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools</i> ?	YES	NO

Ratification of Policy

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

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management 24th of March, 2022.

Signed: _____ Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: _____ Principal

Date of next review: June 2022 (Review of Checklist)

The Board further endorses the Principal, Niall Carty as the school DLP and Paul Caffrey as Deputy DLP.

On behalf of the Board of Management:

_____ (Chairperson) Date: _____

APPENDIX A

Child Protection Practices

The staff and Board of Management of this school have identified the following 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:

- 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 is respected

School personnel should avoid doing anything of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves. (See Intimate Care Policy).

School personnel should never engage in or allow:

- The use of inappropriate language or behaviours
- Physical punishment of any kind
- Sexually provocative games or suggestive comments about or to a child
- The use of sexually explicit or pornographic material

All media products (YouTube clips, CDs, DVDs, etc.) should be checked for their appropriateness with regard to age and suitability.

Visitors/Guest Speakers

Vetted guest speakers and visiting teachers of varying disciplines, employed by the Board of Management of Sacred Heart B.N.S. to perform specific duties, will be allowed work with a class unsupervised only at the Principal's discretion.

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 is appropriate.

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 (if allocated), 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 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.

Toileting accidents

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, if possible, 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 of such an incident.

Accidents

While every precaution will be taken under our Health and Safety Statement to ensure the safety of children, we realise that accidents will happen. While details of such accidents in the yard will be recorded in yard incident books, all serious accidents will additionally be noted by the secretary. If deemed appropriate, an accident may be addressed as part of Health & Safety.

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 (if allocated) will be carried out under the direction of the class teacher in an open environment.

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 area 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 parents/guardians of the child will be asked to assist the child. Children from 1st -3rd class take swimming lessons. Children get ready before and after the lesson in a designated open plan area.

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 the Principal and Parents.

Attendance

Our school attendance will be monitored as per our Attendance Policy. With regard to child protection, we will pay particular attention to trends in non-attendance. Any pupil with a pattern of poor attendance will be monitored for signs of neglect/physical/emotional abuse.

Behaviour

Children are encouraged at all times to play co-operatively and inappropriate behaviour will be addressed under our Code of Behaviour. If an incident occurs which we consider to be of a sexualised nature we will notify the DLP who will record it and respond to it appropriately.

Bullying

Bullying behaviour will be addressed under our Anti-Bullying policy. If the behaviour involved is of a sexualised nature or regarded as being particularly abusive, then the matter will be referred to the DLP.

Children travelling in staff cars

Members of the school staff will not transport individual children in their cars at any time.

Communication

Every effort will be made to enhance pupil-teacher communication. If pupils have concerns they will be listened to sympathetically. The SPHE/Oral Language/RE programmes allow for open pupil-teacher communication, which aids the pupil-teacher relationship. If teachers have to communicate with pupils on a one-to-one basis, they are requested to leave the classroom door open or request a colleague to attend.

Induction of Staff

The DLP will be responsible for informing all new teachers and ancillary staff of *Children First* – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011) and the Child Protection Procedures (DES, 2011). The DLP will give a copy of the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, Chapters 3 & 4 and Appendix 1 of *Children First* and this Child Protection Policy to all new staff. All teachers are expected to teach the designated SPHE objectives for their class. A member of staff, once trained, will be responsible for the mentoring of new teachers and will be responsible for supporting new teachers as they implement the SPHE objectives. The Principal is responsible for ensuring that new teachers know how to record attendance on the Aladdin system.

Induction of Pupils

All parents and children will be made aware of attendance rules and their implications as laid down in the Education Welfare Act (2000). All parents will be informed of the programmes in place in the school that deal with personal development e.g. RSE, Walk Tall, Stay Safe and SPHE. All new parents will be informed of the procedures. Parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the class teacher/principal if they wish to discuss their child's progress. All parents will be given a copy of the school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies.

Internet Safety

It is the intention of the Principal and Staff at Sacred Heart B.N.S. to ensure that child protection concerns will be addressed in the school's Acceptable Use Policy as part of its Information and Communication Technology policy. The Stay Safe lessons will be supplemented with a lesson from the Internet Safety Pack recently given to 2nd to 6th classes. The school will endeavour to keep parents updated and to stay abreast of the ever –changing situation regarding internet access.

Record Keeping

Teachers will keep records on each child's reports and attendance using the Aladdin System. An electronic roll will be taken daily. Sensitive information regarding children will be shared on a need-to-know basis. All educational files of pupils who no longer attend this school are kept in an out of reach storage area.

Supervision

The school's supervision guidelines will be followed by all staff to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children at all breaks. A rota will be displayed to cover both breaks. (See Supervision Guidelines for agreed rules around break-times and procedures around teacher absences).

Visibility

Teachers will ensure that children are visible in the school playground. Children will not be allowed to spend time in classrooms or toilets where they would not be under adult supervision. They are not to leave the school playground or to engage with adults who are outside of the school playground.

OVERVIEW OF HANDLING DISCLOSURES FROM PUPILS

FURTHER DETAILS IN DES PROCEDURES 3:5

Cognizance must be taken of the school's duty of care to pupils when dealing with disclosures from pupils. Staff should act with tact and sensitivity. Reassurance must be offered whilst explaining the need for action and the possible consequences which will involve other adults being informed.

The following guidelines are to be followed when interviewing a pupil who is making 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

In cases where school personnel have concerns about a child, but are not sure whether to report the matter to the appropriate health board, they should seek advice. To do so, the Designated Liaison Person should consult the appropriate health board staff.

Scoil an Chroí Naofa
Baile na nGall
Baile Átha Cliath 11

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Príomhoide:
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Principal:
Niall Carty

Deputy-Principal:
Paul Caffrey

<http://www.sacredheartballygall.ie/>

Dear Parents/Guardian,

In recent years, as a society, we have become very aware of the problem of child abuse through neglect, emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

Each one of us has a duty to protect children and *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2011) notes that teachers, who are the main care givers to children outside the family, are particularly well placed to observe and monitor children for signs of abuse.

In response to this, the Department of Education and Skills published *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (2011) in relation to child protection and welfare. These procedures promote the safety and welfare of all children and are to be welcomed.

The Board of Management of the Sacred Heart B.N.S. has adopted these procedures as school policy. Consequently, if school staff suspect or are alerted to possible child abuse (neglect, emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse) they are obliged to refer this matter to Children and Family Service of the HSE. The HSE will then assess the situation and provide support for the child concerned. In our school the Designated Liaison Person for dealing with Child Protection is Niall Carty.

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children may be accessed on the website of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (www.dcyia.ie) and the Department of Education and Skills *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* can be read on the Department's website (www.education.ie). Parents/Guardians are also welcome to look through the procedures and Child Protection Policy here at the school.

Yours Sincerely,

Niall Carty.

STANDARD REPORT FORM
(For reporting CP & W Concerns to HSE)

A. To Principal Social Worker/Designate: _____

1. Date of Report: _____

2. Details of Child

Name:	_____	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>
Address:	_____	School: _____	

		Correspondence address (if different)

3. Details of Persons Reporting Concern(s)

Address:	_____	Occupation	_____
		Relationship to client	_____
Reporter wishes to remain anonymous	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Reporter discussed with parents/guardians	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Parents Aware of Report

Are the child's parents/carers aware that this concern is being reported to the HSE?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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5. Details of Report

(Details of concern(s), allegation(s) or incident(s) dates, times, who was present, description of any observed injuries, parent's view(s), child's view(s) if known.)

National Child Care Information System Project – Phase 3

STANDARD REPORT FORM
(For reporting CP & W Concerns to HSE)

6. Relationships

Details of Mother		Details of Father	
Name:	_____	Name:	_____
Address: (if different to child)	_____	Address: (if different to child)	_____

Tel. Nos:		Tel. Numbers	

7. Household Composition

Name:	Relationship	DOB	Additional information, e.g. school/occupation/other

8. Name and address of other personnel or agencies involved with this child:

	Name	Address
Social Worker		
PHN		
GP		
Hospital		
School		
Gardaí		
Pre-School/Creche/YG		
Other (Specify)		

9. Details of person(s) allegedly causing concern in relation to the child

Relationship to child:		Age ____	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name:						
Address:						

10. Details of person completing form

Name:		Occupation:	
Signed:		Date:	