

# Solas Chríost National School

## Child Protection Policy

This document is formulated in response to recent changes in Guidance and Procedures in relation to Child Protection matters and takes account of the provisions of each of the following important 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*.

### References

- 'Children First' (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011)
- 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (Department of Education and Skills (DES), 2011)

The Board of Management (BOM) recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and must be reflected in each school policy, school 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 BOM of Solas Chríost NS has approved this Child Protection Policy.

The BOM has adopted and will fully implement without modification the Department of Education and Skills Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2011. These procedures will therefore underpin the content of this policy.

The following key personnel have been identified and ratified by the BOM:

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Mr Edward Kelly (Principal).

The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Mrs Eibhlin MacNamara

In its policies, practices and activities, Solas Chríost National School 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 and will therefore;
- 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 school will adhere to the above principles in relation to any adult/pupil with a special vulnerability.

Specific policies named hereunder are key elements of this overall document and must be referred to in the context of this policy:

|                   |                           |                    |                             |
|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Attendance        | Health & Safety           | Critical Incidents | Supervision                 |
| Code of Behaviour | Enrolment                 | Data Protection    | ICT – Acceptable Use Policy |
| Anti-Bullying     | Special Educational Needs | Tours/Trips        | Induction of Staff          |

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 consider 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.

This policy is available to all school personnel and the Parent Association and is readily accessible to parents on request. It is also available in hard copy in each classroom. A copy of this policy is available for the attention of the DES and the patron if requested.

#### **Designated Liaison Person (DLP)**

The DLP and the Deputy DLP will undertake any training considered necessary to keep them updated on child protection.

The DLP has specific responsibility for Child Protection Procedures and will represent the school in all correspondence with Health Boards, An Garda Síochána and other parties in connection with allegations of abuse. All matters pertaining to child abuse concerns should be processed through the DLP (DES Procedures 3:2).

The DLP acts appropriately 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 Health Board 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 Health Board cannot be contacted, and the child appears to be at immediate and serious risk, An Garda Síochána should be contacted. A child should not be left in a dangerous situation where Health Board intervention is not forthcoming. (DES Procedures 1:9)

#### **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 a child protection concern 'reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of Health Boards or any member of an Garda Síochána (DES Procedures 1:10)

#### **Qualified Privilege / Freedom of Information Acts**

People making a report to the DLP in good faith have 'qualified privilege' under common law (DES Procedures 1:11). Reports made to Health Boards 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 1:12).

#### **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'** (Dept. of Children & Youth Affairs, Chapter 2)

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, medical care.

### **Guidelines for Recognition of Child Abuse**

Chapter 2 of Children First (2011) outlines the principal types of child abuse and offers guidance on how to recognise such abuse. Each abuse type is further detailed in Appendix 1 of Children First and Appendix 3 of the DES Procedures (2011). 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 indicating 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' (Chapter 2)

### **Handling Disclosures from Children**

The DES Procedures (3:5) gives comprehensive details of how disclosures should be approached. Staff 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 DLP is 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 guidelines in 'Children First'.

### **Allegations or Suspicions in relation to School Employees**

Chapter 5 of the DES Procedures (2011) sets out the procedures for schools in situations where an allegation of abuse or neglect is made against any school employee.

### **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. Solas Chríost National School shall fully implement the Stay Safe programme during the second term of the school 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 the Parents' Association and is readily accessible to parents on request. The policy and the DES Procedures will also be available in hard copy in each classroom.
3. The name of the DLP and other relevant support services 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 BOM meeting, the Principal's Report shall include the number of all such cases and this shall be recorded in the minutes of the BOM meeting.
5. Solas Chríost National School will undertake an annual review of its Child Protection Policy and its implementation by the school, using the checklist, in Appendix 2 of the DES Procedure. 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 Parent Association. A record of the review and its outcome shall be made available, if requested, to the patron and the DES.
6. The SPHE curriculum will be implemented in full in the school.

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.

### **Ratification of the Child Protection 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 on March 4<sup>th</sup> 2014

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Principal

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of next review: September 2014

## **APPENDIX A - Child Protection Practices**

The staff and BOM of this school have identified the following as areas of specific concern in relation to Child Protection. Following discussion and consultation, the staff and BOM 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

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

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 (CDs, DVDs etc.) should be checked for their appropriateness with regard to age and suitability.

### **Visitors/Guest Speakers**

Appropriately appointed and screened visiting teachers of varying disciplines, engaged by the BOM of Solas Chríost NS to perform specific duties, will be left work with a class alone 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.

### **New Personnel /Teaching Practice Students**

Teaching practice students should not be left alone with pupils. The classroom door should be left open, as is the policy for teachers on yard duty. The corresponding teacher will supervise.

### **Induction of Staff**

The DLP will be responsible for informing all new teachers and ancillary staff of the school's Child Protection Policy, the Child Protection Procedures (DES, 2011) and Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011).

### **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.
- 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.
- Children with physical disabilities who may require assistance in toileting will be aided by a Special Needs Assistant who has met the necessary screening requirements when being employed by the school.

### **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. Parents will be notified.

## **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. Accidents will be noted in our Incident Book and will be addressed under our Accident Policy as part of Health and Safety. If a child is injured on yard and there is no SNA cover for that yard, the child is brought to the corresponding block for first aid. If the incident is serious the First Aid Staff Representative is called to assess the injury.

## **One-to-one teaching**

- Staff should make every effort not be alone in a classroom with one child or detain a child on their own after school. In the case of special needs pupils where resource hours and assistance are sanctioned on an individual basis, it is school policy that staff in such a situation should work with the classroom door open, thus rendering the occupants visible at all times.
- It is the policy in this school that one-to-one teaching can sometimes be 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.

## **Teacher has to leave the classroom**

If a teacher has to leave a class, the classroom door should be left open, as is the policy for teachers on yard duty. The corresponding teacher will supervise.

## **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 unsupervised 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. Solas Chríost NS will endeavour to have two male volunteers/member of staff in the male changing area and two female members of staff/ volunteers in the female changing area.

The BOM of Solas Chríost NS has requested that all swimming volunteers apply to be vetted. In the interim, a Volunteer Form approved by the CPSMA will be in use. 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 regards to child protection, we will pay particular attention to trends in non-attendance. We will also monitor non-attendance in correlation with signs of neglect/physical/emotional abuse. The Child and Family Agency will be informed of all children who have missed 20 or more days from school in a school year.

## **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 carry children alone in their cars at any time. In the case of an emergency the teacher will seek permission from the parent to drive the child home with another adult present.

## **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 is hoped will aid 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. After school hours, any communication with a child should go through the child's parent.

**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 given a copy of the school's enrolment policy, which outlines the procedures parents and children should use when contacting the school if there are absences or concerns of an educational/personal/family matter. 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. At the in-take meeting for Junior Infants the parents are informed of the basic procedures and policies of the school.

**Internet Safety**

It is the intention of the Principal and Staff at Solas Chríost NS 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 in each classroom may be supplemented with appropriate resources.

**Record Keeping**

Teachers will keep progress records on each child. These records are kept safely by each class teacher. Roll books will be updated 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 stored securely in the school.

**Visibility**

Teachers will ensure, to the best of their ability, that children are visible in the school playground during school hours. Children will not be allowed to spend time in classrooms, toilets or sheds where they would not be under adult supervision. Children that need to re-enter the building will be monitored by an adult at the block door. They are not to leave the school playground or to engage with adults who are outside of the school playground.

**Supervision**

The school's supervision rota 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 the 10:50am and lunchtime breaks. Teachers have agreed rules around break-times and procedures around teacher absences (outlined in staff member booklet).



**Designated Liaison Person (DLP)**

Mr Edward Kelly (Principal)  
Phone: 01 451 7134

**Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP)**

Mrs Eibhlin MacNamara  
Phone: 01 451 7134

**‘The Children and Family Social Services of the HSE’**

Millbrook Lawns, Tallaght, Dublin 24  
Phone: 01 4686289  
Fax: 01 4686359

**Tallaght Garda Station:**

Phone: 01 6666000

## APPENDIX C – Letter to Parents

Dear Parents/Guardians,

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, the National Guidelines, for the Protection and Welfare of Children noted 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 procedures for all schools in relation to child protection and welfare. These guidelines promote the safety and welfare of all children and are to be welcomed.

The Board of Management of Solas Chríost National School has adopted these guidelines as school policy. Consequently, if school staff suspect or are alerted to possible child abuse, they are obliged to refer this matter to the Health Service Executive (HSE). The HSE will then assess the situation and provide support for the child concerned.

Children First – National Guidance for the Protection of Children may be assessed on the website of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs ([www.dcyh.ie](http://www.dcyh.ie)) and the Department of Education and Skills Child Protection Procedures can be read on the Department's website ([www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)). Parents/Guardians are also welcome to look through the guidelines here at the school.

Yours sincerely,

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Mr Edward Kelly  
Principal

## **APPENDIX D - Child Protection Guidelines Checklist for School Employees**

**Designated Liaison Person:** Mr Edward Kelly (Principal)

**Deputy Designated Liaison Person:** Mrs Eibhlin MacNamara (Deputy Principal)

### **If a child discloses information to you:-**

- Listen
- Do not ask leading questions
- Offer reassurance but do not promise not to tell
- Explain that other adults may need to be told - DLP
- Do not stop the child speaking
- Do not over react or comment
- Inform DLP - If you have a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern that a child is at risk or has suffered abuse, the DLP should contact the Health Board for advice
- At the earliest opportunity, record accurately what the child has said – Using the child's own words. Record date/time and context of the disclosure. Use child's registration number – Not child's name
- Facts only
- Sketch signs of physical injury if appropriate
- Retain records for a period of 21 years in keeping with the school's Data Protection Policy

### **The following should also be reported to the DLP:**

- An account from a person who saw a child being abused
- Injury consistent with abuse
- Dysfunctional behaviour
- Implausible explanations for injury or behaviour
- Consistent evidence over a period of time that a child is being emotionally or physically neglected

### **Health Board Response:**

- School is asked to monitor the situation
- Formal report is requested , sent by DLP and on receipt case is allocated to Social Worker
- Preliminary enquiry – Screening process
- Initial assessment

### **Possible outcomes:**

- Case closed
- Family support
- Child Protection Plan (usually following a case conference)