

Appendix B: Code of Best Practice in relation to Child Safeguarding

This Code of Best Practice was devised by the Board of Management and staff of St. Joseph's N.S. in order to protect the pupils and staff in St. Joseph's N.S.

When children are under the supervision of the school, teachers are considered to be 'in loco parentis'. To that end, staff are advised to act with prudence, having due regard for their responsibilities in the area of child protection.

This is particularly important when dealing with children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). It is crucial that practices take account of their individual needs, their protection and the protection of school staff involved with meeting those needs.

All staff members are aware of the following procedures and practices and work within them. It is also important to note that while every effort will be made to adhere to agreed best practice, in the event of an emergency or unforeseen circumstances, this may not be possible or practicable. In such instances, a full record of the incident will be made and reported to the principal, parents of children involved and Board of Management, as appropriate.

The staff and Board of Management of St. Joseph's N.S. have identified the following as areas of specific concern in relation to child protection as per Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment in Appendix A: -

- Recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers
- General Conduct/ Physical Contact
- Changing for Games/ PE and swimming
- One-to-one teaching
- Visitors/ Guests/ Sales Representatives
- Internet Safety
- Pupils with Special Educational Needs (S.E.N.)
- Supervision
- Child Absconding
- Prevention

Following discussion and consultation the staff and Board of Management have agreed that the following practices be adopted in relation to the above areas.

A. Recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers

In recruiting staff and volunteers, it is crucial to ensuring that those working with the children in the school are safe adults insofar as this can be determined. While correct procedures will always be followed in relation to advertising, interviewing and the selection of staff, other practices will also be considered. All applicants will be asked to supply in writing information which includes: -

- appropriate personal details
- a resumé of past and current work/ volunteering experience, indicating relevant qualifications or skills acquired
- at least two written references – verification of references will be sought through making verbal contact with the referees.

Garda vetting/ Vetting disclosure, where necessary, will always be sought, and appointment is always subject to such vetting, but it is important to note that garda vetting is not in itself a complete safeguard, as many perpetrators of abuse are not known to the authorities.

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Department of Education and Skills circulars 26/ 2015 and 31/ 2016 will be fully implemented in relation to the recruitment of all staff, regardless of the duration.

All volunteers and sports coaches will be Garda Vetted through the school and no volunteer or coach will have unsupervised access to children at any time. The class teacher will remain with his/ her class. If this is not possible, for any reason, another teacher will stay with the class.

B. General Conduct/ Physical Contact

In all dealings with the children in St. Joseph's N.S., a balance is struck between the rights of the child and the need for intervention. As a general rule any physical contact between school personnel and the child will be in response to the needs of the child and not the needs of the adult. While physical contact can be used to comfort, reassure or assist a child the following will be factors in assessing its appropriateness: -

- it is acceptable to the child concerned
- it is open and not secretive
- it is appropriate to the age and developmental stage of the child

Physical contact may be necessary if/ when verbal commands are not followed and a pupil is considered a danger to him/herself and/ or others (pupils or staff). In the event of a staff member using physical contact (e.g. holding a pupil's hand to stop absconding from school building or grounds, walking a pupil to/ from SET classroom, assisting a pupil down from a height, stopping a pupil using a weapon to hit another pupil or adult, removing a potential weapon from a pupil etc) that staff member will inform the principal and write a detailed report about the incident and give it to the DLP. The pupil's parents will be informed about the incident. School personnel will use their professional judgement as to when they consider it necessary to use physical contact with a pupil to protect that pupil or others.

School personnel will not do things of a personal nature for a child which the child can do for him/ herself. Inappropriate physical contact also includes rough physical play and horseplay (tickling, wrestling etc).

All children will be treated with equal respect – favouritism is not acceptable. School personnel will never engage in or allow:

- the use of inappropriate language or behaviours, e.g. sarcasm
- physical punishment of any kind
- sexually provocative games or sexually suggestive comments about or to a child
- the use of sexually explicit or pornographic material etc.

All media products: CDs, DVDs, computer software etc. – will be checked for its appropriateness with regard to age and suitability. Where a doubt exists with regard to the suitability of material, parents, principal and/ or Board of Management will be consulted as necessary.

The Board of Management and all school personnel are familiar with the DES guidelines on child protection/ child safeguarding, have a copy of the school Child Safeguarding Statement, Risk Assessment and Code of Best Practice in relation to Child Safeguarding and either have an electronic copy or access to a hard copy of the DES 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017' and 'Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017' and DES Circular 81/ 2017.

All school personnel have engaged in child safeguarding training and adhered to the Child Safeguarding Statement, in the event of concerns or disclosures around child protection. The

Designated Liaison Person will be notified promptly of any concerns with regard to the behaviour of a staff member or any allegations of abuse made by a child or an adult.

All registered teachers are required to follow the Teaching Council's 'Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers'.

C. Changing for Games/ PE and Swimming

For P.E. and games during the school day parents are requested to ensure that children wear suitable clothing for games/PE (i.e. grey tracksuit bottoms) and runners. Velcro runners are recommended for children in junior classes.

When children from the school are going to swimming lessons parents are requested to ensure children wear their swimming costume to school, under their clothes. When at all possible the school will request to be allocated individual changing cubicles for the children. If the communal changing room must be used the teacher will check on pupils, leaving the door ajar, encouraging the pupils to dress quickly. At least two teachers will accompany children while attending swimming lessons. Parents may volunteer to assist. (Section A will be followed and all volunteers will be garda vetted through the school).

If a pupil needs assistance the following will be taken into consideration: -

- a balance is struck between the child's right to privacy and adequate supervision with due regard to gender issues
- where children need assistance with changing agreement should be reached between parents and staff as to how best those needs can be met
- clear boundaries are set down if volunteers are involved in assisting with changing, supervision etc.
- boundaries will vary depending on age/needs of child and on the physical constraints
- parents are notified if volunteers are assisting children
- staff should avoid assisting children with anything of a personal nature that the child can do for him/herself
- a report of any incident will be made to the principal, DLP, parents and Board of Management, as appropriate.

D. One-to-one teaching

One to one teaching will occur when a child has been granted Resource Teaching hours. It may also arise where children are absent from a group attending Learning Support. Every effort will be made to ensure the protection of the children and the staff member. The child's parents will be advised that the one-to-one teaching will take place and will be informed of the measures put in place to protect both the child and the teacher. These will include the following: -

- If there is no vision panel in the classroom door the door will be left open or ajar.
- The pupils will be seated opposite the teacher, with a distance of at least one table.
- All teaching sessions will be timetables and adhered to.
- Parents/ guardians will be asked to give their consent for this teaching to take place.

E. Visitor/ Guest Speakers/ Sales Representatives

Visitors/ Guest speakers to the school will never be left alone with children. Visitors/ Guest Speakers will usually be invited to the school and a date and time given. Visitors/ Guest Speakers will usually outline in advance the purpose of the visit and outline what they will speak about. The school (BOM/ principal/ class teacher, as appropriate) has a responsibility to check out the credentials of the visitor/ guest speaker and to ensure that the content/ material in use is appropriate. Guest speakers will be garda vetted.

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All external doors of the school are kept locked. All Visitors/ Guest Speakers and Sales Representatives should ring the doorbell beside the main door to gain access to the school. They should then report to the secretary's office. All sales representatives are encouraged to make an appointment to speak with the principal/ relevant person prior to visiting the school. St. Joseph's N.S. aware that this may not always be possible. Sales Representatives that do not contact the school prior to arrival may not get talking to the principal or relevant. Sales Representatives, on first visit to the school, will be asked to show their identification. Sales Representatives will never be left alone with children.

Parents are considered visitors to the school and should follow the above procedures when visiting the school.

F. Internet Safety

The school Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) and ICT Policy will be fully implemented at all times. Children will never have unsupervised access to the internet. Children are not allowed bring mobile phones or electronic devices to school. (See the school policy on Mobile Phones and Electronic Devices). While these technologies are not inherently bad, their usage during school hours will be under strict teacher supervision.

G. Pupils with Special Educational Needs

Research has shown that children with special educational needs are more vulnerable and consequently more at risk of becoming victims of abuse for reasons such as: -

- Poor communication skills
- Limited sense of danger
- Need for intimate care
- Lack of mobility and greater reliance on adults
- Need for attention, friendship or affection
- Limited assertiveness and poorer self-confidence
- Limited understanding of sexuality or sexual behaviour
- Fear of not being believed

The B.O.M. and staff of St. Joseph's N.S. will ensure that the personal safety and education needs of all children with special educational needs are adequately met with due regard to the specific vulnerabilities of individual children. The Stay Safe pack '*Personal Safety Skills for Children with Learning Difficulties*' (1996) was designed to supplement the Stay Safe mainstream pack to assist teachers with this work.

Consideration will also be given to how class work can be supplemented by the Special Education Teacher, e.g. oral language, vocabulary development and communication work around the Stay Safe programme.

Special Needs Assistants (SNA's) play a vital role in the everyday care of children with special educational needs. All school personnel have child safeguarding training. See the School Special Educational Needs Policy for more information.

H. Supervision

Pupils in St. Joseph's N.S. will be adequately supervised at all times as outlined in the school Supervision Policy.

I. Child Absconding

If a child was to abscond the school building or school grounds he/ she is at great risk of harm. As per the school 'Code of Behaviour' Children are not allowed leaved the school grounds without

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permission and must be collected by an adult if leaving the school during the school day. Children must be collected in the school. Parents are asked to inform the school if collecting a child early and each class teacher will keep a record of children leaving his/ her before the end of the school day, the reason for leaving and the identity of the person collecting them.

Procedures are put in place to make it more difficult for any pupil to abscond such as external doors locked during the school day and school gates are also locked during the school day from approx. 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

If a pupil was to leave a classroom or the school building without permission the teacher will give clear verbal instructions/ commands to the pupil to stop and return to the classroom/school building. If the pupil continues the teachers should immediately inform/ send for the principal or another member of staff. If the teachers cannot do this him/herself two pupils will be sent to inform the principal/ other member of staff. The second member of staff should, if at all possible, bring a mobile phone with him/ her. All staff members will remain calm.

The class teacher will inform the class teacher next door, leaving his/ her classroom door open, as per the school Supervision Policy, and leave to follow the pupil.

The pupil will be followed and verbal instructions/ commands will be repeated. It may be necessary for a staff member(s) to hold a pupil's hand to prevent the pupil from leaving the school building/ school grounds and walk the pupil back inside.

If a pupil was to leave the school grounds the gardai will be contacted immediately. The pupil will be followed and encouraged to return to school. Staff will try not to run after the child s this may cause him/her to run faster. Again a pupil's hand may need to be held to walk the pupil back to school.

On return to the school the pupil may need quiet time in either a Special Education Room, the principals' office or the staffroom. The pupil will be asked why he/ she left the school building/ grounds, the dangers of doing so will be highlighted and the pupil will be punished as per the school Code of Behaviour. The child's parents will be informed and the pupil may need to be sent home to reflect on the incident.

Factors such as the pupils age, reason for leaving, and whether or not the pupil has special educational needs will be taken into account when deciding on an appropriate punishment.

The staff involved will write an account of the incident and give it to the DLP as soon as possible after the incident.

St. Joseph's N.S. acknowledges that any situation where a child leaves a classroom, school building or school grounds is stressful for the child, the teacher, the wider school community and the parents. It is important the all staff stay calm in these circumstances. The school is here to support teachers/ staff in such a case and to ensure the safety of the child is maintained. This protocol will be used together with professional judgement and experience to guide staff in incidents of this nature.

J. 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' Social Personal and Health Education (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

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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 year in accordance with the SPHE plan. Staff will make every effort to ensure that the messages of the programme are reinforced whenever possible.