

**St. Mochta's National School**  
**Clonsilla, Dublin 15**

**Child Protection Policy**

**1. Mission Statement**

The mission of St. Mochta's National School is for every child to learn, develop and grow in a safe, secure and stable learning environment.

**2. National Legislative Structure**

St. Mochta's National School recognises that the rights of children are enshrined in the constitution of Ireland and International and domestic law.

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, including Anti-Bullying Policy, SPHE Policy, PE Policy and Special Educational Needs Policy.

In Ireland, the key legislative provisions regarding the safety, well-being and protection of children are as follows:

- The Child Care Act, 1991
- Domestic Violence Act, 1996
- Protections for Persons reporting Act, 1998
- The Education Act, 1998
- The Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997
- Freedom of Information Act, 1997
- The Education and Welfare Act, 2000
- Children's Act, 2001
- Ombudsman for Children Act, 2002

The Statutory Authorities with responsibility for the protection and welfare of children are:

- The Health Service Executive
- An Garda Siochana

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.

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.

The Board of Management of St Mochta's National School fully endorse 'Children First' National Guidance for the protection of Children, Department of Health and Children 2011 and Department of Education and Science Circular 65/2011 Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools.

Copies of both of these documents are available at the school office. The Board undertakes to circulate this Child Protection Policy to all parents/ Guardians at the time of enrolment and to ensure that it is available on the school website [www.stmochtas.ie](http://www.stmochtas.ie)

### **3. Policy**

Within this framework, the staff and community of St. Mochta's National School accept our responsibility and the obligation to safeguard the protection and welfare of children in our care, we undertake to ensure a best practice response to child protection issues by having a clear child protection policy and procedures which are designed to underpin and demonstrate our commitment to our duty of care. The welfare of the child is paramount in every circumstance. The guidelines outlined above, give clear direction and guidance on child protection issues. It is incumbent upon every adult working with children to practice their 'moral responsibility' in reporting concerns, allegations, suspicions or a disclosure about child abuse to the Designated Liaison Person, Maria Farrell, for Child Protection.

The policy is implemented by:

- Having in place recruitment and selection procedures for staff as laid down by the Department of Education and Science, the Irish National Teachers Organisation and the Catholic Primary School's Managers Association.
- Having an obligation on staff to observe this code of good practice.
- Ensuring all staff members undertake Child Protection Training.
- Having procedures in place for reporting disclosures, allegations, suspicions and awareness of all forms of abuse to the civil authorities.
- By having pastoral support measures for victims, their families and staff.

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.

This policy is implemented on a day-to-day basis in the following ways:

- All visitors to the school sign-in and sign-out and are given a visitor's badge to be easily identified.
- The teacher always remains with their class with student teachers or any other visitors.
- The teacher always remains with their class when outside coaches are working with children.
- The door always remains open when all withdrawal groups are in Learning Support.
- The door always remains open during one-to-one Resource Teaching.
- Doors will always remain open where a staff member is on their own with a child, e.g. if a child returns to a classroom to collect forgotten items.
- Doors will be open where an SNA and/or staff member needs to check blood sugar levels or administer medication.
- The school has a policy on toileting and intimate care.
- Movement breaks for children with special educational needs takes place around the PE hall, where doors are always open.
- Parent volunteers are requested to become Garda vetted and may be involved in the following activities:
  - accompanying the class with teacher to and from the church, swimming pool, library, school tours, athletics, santry sports, GAA matches.
- A teacher/parent will only stand at the door of the changing room to encourage children to change promptly for return journey to school.
- From time to time, a NEPS psychologist may need to complete an assessment for a child in our school. In this instance, NEPS guidelines are followed where the assessment is briefly interrupted on a few occasions by a staff member.
- A staff member will always be present where a visiting teacher occupational therapist or speech & language therapist is working with a child.

#### **4. Reporting Procedures**

**All child protection concerns/issues will be reported to the Designated Liaison Person in the School (in this instance, the School Principal, Maria Farrell) or in her absence, the Deputy Designated Liaison Person, who will assume her responsibilities (in this instance the Deputy Principal, Margaret O'Boyce).**

In making any report an individual needs to take the following into consideration;

- The protection and safety of the child is paramount.
- The principle of natural justice – a person is innocent until proven otherwise.
- The principle of confidentiality – only those that need to know should be told of a suspicion/ allegation/disclosure of abuse and that the number that needs to be kept informed should be kept to a minimum.

#### **4.1 Allegations/Disclosures**

If a member of staff receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, he/she should without delay report the matter to the schools Designated Liaison Person. A detailed written report should be made by the person reporting and placed in a secure location by the Designated Liaison Person. If the Designated Liaison Person is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation (Children First 3.4 and 3.5), he/she should report the matter to the health board immediately in accordance with the procedures laid down in the above guidelines.

The Designated Liaison Person should then inform the Board of Management that a report involving a student in the school has been made to the relevant authorities.

#### **4.2 Allegations/Disclosures against Staff**

It is important to note that there are two procedures to be followed in this instance:

1. The reporting procedure in respect of the allegation and
  2. The procedure in dealing with the employee
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1. Where an allegation is made directly to the Designated Liaison Person against a member of staff, the Designated Liaison person will follow the procedures laid out above in 4.1. The Designated Liaison Person should always inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management in this instance.

It is important to note that the same person should not have responsibility for dealing with the reporting issue and the employment issue. Only where the allegation is made against the Designated Liaison Person should the Chairperson assume the responsibility for both matters.

2. The Chairperson should privately inform the staff member of the fact of the allegation, the nature of the allegation and whether or not the allegation has been reported to the relevant authorities. The staff member should then be invited to respond formally within an agreed time frame.

The Chairperson should, at all times, act in the interests of the child and should take any protective measures to ensure this. The Chairperson must therefore decide if it is necessary to direct the employee to absent him/herself from the school with immediate effect. The Chairperson may take the advice of the relevant authorities in making this decision. The Chairperson should also inform the Board of Management who should support the Chairperson in conducting the necessary level of enquiry into the allegation.

Through the process the Chairperson and the Board of Management should follow the guidelines as set out in 4.3 and 4.4 of the 'Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures' for Primary school's as published by The Department of Education and Science (see above).

### **4.3 Emergencies**

In the case of emergency, where a child is deemed at serious risk and where no contact with the school's Child Protection Representative is possible, the course of action is to contact the local Garda Station.

### **5. Breach of Policy**

Any intentional breach of this Code of Good Practice is a disciplinary matter and will be dealt with by the Board of Management.

This policy is open to review by the Board of Management.

Ratified and signed on behalf of the Board of Management of St. Mochta's National School.



**Tony Rock**  
**Chairperson**



**Maria Farrell**  
**Principal**

11<sup>th</sup> November, 2014

**Date**