



**St. Ita's and St. Joseph's  
Primary and Post-Primary School**

**Child Protection Policy**

## **Introductory Statement**

St. Ita's and St. Joseph's endeavours to nourish the educational, social, emotional, spiritual and physical development of each student to his/her potential with the future expectation of active participation in his/her local community. The role of the school is to provide an appropriate education for our pupils. A stable, secure learning environment is essential in order to achieve this goal. Here in St. Ita's and St. Joseph's, we are committed to creating a safe and positive learning environment that is respectful, inclusive and caring for all our pupils. We believe that children have the right to learn in an environment in which they feel secure and protected from all forms of harm; such as neglect, assault, ill-treatment or sexual abuse. Our staff are vigilant for any signs of distress or harm among our pupils and apply our safeguarding procedures diligently to address and alleviate any such problems.

The staff, parents and management of St. Ita's and St. Joseph'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 Skills Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures will be made available to all staff on the school server and on the school website. They are also available in each classroom and at the front entrance to our school.

It is incumbent on all staff to familiarise themselves with 'Children First' and the DES Child Protection Guidelines and procedures. These are available for download from the school server to which all staff have access. They are also available in each classroom and at the entrance to our school.

## **Aims**

This policy aims to:

- Create a safe, trusting, responsive and caring environment for students and staff
- 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 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.

## **Prevention**

The Stay Safe Programme for Children with Learning Difficulties 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 in line with our SPHE/RSE policies. The formal lessons of the programme will be taught in their entirety every second year in accordance with the SPHE two-year cycle plan, which began implementation in September 2010. The Stay Safe Programme is the primary resource used to provide education for pupils on abuse prevention in the primary class as part of the schools SPHE Curriculum under the Strand Unit, Safety and Protection.

Parents are informed that an RSE programme at post-primary levels is in use in the school and permission is sought from the parents of all pupils before commencing the programme. Staff will make every effort to ensure that the messages of the programme are reinforced whenever possible.

Pupils for post-primary are assigned to a class according to their readiness and maturity for the programme. As pupils in this school have special needs there is a necessity to revise the language in relation to the lessons continuously. Junior Cycle

Level 1 & 2 Priority Learning Units, Personal Care and Wellbeing provides opportunities to explore personal safety. The LCA, Social Education Module explores RSE in more detail. All classes would have a classroom assistant present, and this facilitates the whole school approach. An IEP/PPP meeting is held for parents and relevant professional once a year and matters in relation to Child Protection are discussed if required.

### **Procedures**

All staff (teachers, special needs assistants, ancillary staff, secretarial, bus escorts) in this school will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in 'Children First' and the Department of Education and Skills document, 'Child Protection, Guidelines and Procedures'. A Child Safeguarding Statement was developed in March 2018 in line with recommendations in the Children First Act. This Safeguarding Statement is displayed in all classrooms and is also available to view on the server and the school website. This Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed annually. The Board of Management of this school has appointed the Principal as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the Deputy Principal as the Deputy DLP.

### **Practice**

The staff and Board of Management of this school have identified the following as areas of specific concern in relation to child protection. Following discussions and consultation, the staff and Board of Management have 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, safeguard 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.

(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. Garda vetting is required for all substitutes and students on placement prior to commencement in the school.

(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, 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. 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. The needs of the student should be outlined by the parent in the medical form provided by the school on enrolment. 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 (see Policy on Physical Intimate Care).

(d) 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.

(e) One to One teaching

If one-to-one teaching is 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 (with one adult present) 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. If a staff is on their own with a pupil, the door to the room will remain open at all times.

(f) Changing for Games/ PE/ Swimming

Pupils will be expected to dress and undress themselves for games/PE/ swimming. Where assistance is needed it will necessary to have the consent of parents to change the pupil in the facilities provided by the leisure centre. 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 the parents/guardians.

**Handling disclosures from children (taken from the Child Protection Guidelines)**

An abused child is likely to be under severe emotional stress and a staff member may be the only adult whom the child is prepared to trust. Great care should be taken not to damage that trust. When information is offered in confidence, the member of staff will need to act with sensitivity in responding to the disclosure. The member of staff will need to reassure the child, and retain his or her trust, while explaining the need for action and the possible consequences, which will necessarily involve other adults being informed. It is important to tell the child that everything possible will be done to protect and support him/her, but not to make promises that cannot be kept e.g. promising not to tell anyone else. While the basis for concern must be established as comprehensively as possible, the following advice is offered to school personnel to whom a child makes 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.

This information should then be reported to the Designated Liaison Person/ DDLP as outlined in the Child Protection Guidelines (available on school plan on server). The record of the discussion should be given to and retained by the Designated Liaison Person.

**Links to other policy / planning areas:**

- Prevention: Child Safeguarding Statement (available on school website and server)
- SPHE curriculum, Strand Unit on 'Safety and Protection'
- [https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/462570f8-27cc-4f5b-a13e-d1e2de8c18d2/PSEC06\\_SPHE\\_curriculum.pdf](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/462570f8-27cc-4f5b-a13e-d1e2de8c18d2/PSEC06_SPHE_curriculum.pdf)
- Junior Cycle Level 1, PLU Personal Care and Wellbeing
- <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/892c2232-4f91-486c-8e26-f1abbd58ae01/L1LPs-Guidelinesforteachers.pdf>
- Junior Cycle Level 2, PLU Personal Care
- <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/f03b2786-2e04-454e-b0b8-56e313ff62b2/11729-NCCA-Level-2-Guidelines-V5August-2014.pdf>
- LCA, Social Education
- <https://pdst.ie/sites/default/files/Social%20Education.pdf>
- The School Code of Behaviour
- Procedures: Anti-Bullying Policy
- Health and Safety Policy.

Practice: School Tours / Outings: It is recommended that at least two staff members attend all school tours or outings with pupils. It is also recommended if possible, to

have at least one male and one female in attendance. Please see our policy on intimate care for further information on intimate care needs of pupils.

### **Communication and Ratification**

This policy is available on our school server for all staff and is also available on the school website <https://stitasandstjosephs.com/>. This policy adopted by the BoM on 07/12/10 and was reviewed in accordance with the updated procedures received by the principal on the 02/09/11. This policy was reviewed and updated from February - March 2019 and ratified by the BoM on the 04/04/2018. This Policy will be reviewed annually by the BoM.

### **Review and Monitoring**

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Board of Management when the need arises. The Board of Management has provided support from the PDST during the school year 2009-2010 in relation to Child Protection. An advisor visited the school and spoke to staff in this regard. All relevant documentation in relation to this policy can be found in the Child Safeguarding Statement and the SPHE Policy folder in our school plan available on the server and on our website.