

**An Mhodhscoil**  
**Bealach Uí Chonaill, Luimneach**  
**19894C**  
**Child Protection Policy of An Mhodhscoil.**

This document was formulated to take account of the provisions of each of the following:

- Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011.
- ‘Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools’ (Circular 0065/DES 2011).
- The Education Act 1998
- The Child Welfare Act 2000
- Freedom of Information Act 1997.

**The full texts of these documents are accessible on An Mhodhscoil’s School Share for your further information and advice.**

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The Board of Management of An Mhodhscoil 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. Accordingly, in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills, Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, the Board of Management of An Mhodhscoil has agreed the following child protection policy.

The Board 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 Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Diarmuid Ó Murchú.

The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Máire Uí Mhaoláin.

In its policies, practices and activities, An Mhodhscoil 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:

- 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

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Other school policies which are particularly relevant to child protection are:

- The Health and Safety Statement.
- The Pastoral Care Policy.
- Policy in relation to Accidents
- The Code of Behaviour.
- The Anti-bullying Policy.
- The Pupil Attendance Strategy.
- The Supervision of Pupils Policy.
- The Special Needs Policy.
- Intimate Care Policy.
- Stay Safe.
- Communication 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. (See Appendix 2)

This policy has been made available to school personnel and the Parent Association and is readily accessible to parents on request. A copy of this policy will be made available to the DES and the patron if requested.

An Mhodhscoil 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 (included at **Appendix 1**). The school has 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.

*Date of next review: February 2018*

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#### **Introduction**

In An Mhodhscoil all children will be cherished and in fulfilling the general aims of the Primary Curriculum we will:

- Enable the child to live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential.
- Enable the child to develop as a social being through living and cooperating with others and so contribute to the good of society
- Prepare the child for further education and lifelong learning.

In endeavouring to realise these aims we will create a positive school climate which is open, inclusive, respectful, fair, democratic and tolerant and which seeks to support the holistic development of all children and all adults working with our children. The strategies we will use to create this environment are detailed in our SPHE Plan and will involve:

- Creating a health-promoting physical environment
- Enhancing self-esteem
- Fostering respect for diversity
- Building effective communication within the school
- Developing appropriate home-school communication
- Catering for individual needs
- Developing democratic process
- Fostering inclusive and respectful language.

We strive to ensure that our school will be physically and emotionally safe and we will deliver the curricular content of our SPHE programme with a view to giving our children the protective skills of self-esteem and assertiveness. Co-operative interpersonal skills will be developed through working in pairs and working in groups. Older children will be encouraged to work positively with conflict, negotiation and consensus building skills developed.

#### **School Measures Taken to Protect the Children in Our Care**

The following measures will be undertaken by the staff at An Mhodhscoil in order to protect the children in our care.

We will:

- Fully implement the Stay Safe Programme
- Ensure that children are supervised at all times
- Keep a record of attendances
- Keep written records of all incidents, accidents and complaints
- Ensure that home phone numbers, contact numbers and addresses are easily accessible.
- Maintain confidentiality in child protection matters.

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

The Board of Management has nominated Diarmuid Ó Murchú as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Máire Uí Mhaoláin as Deputy DLP. The DLP has specific responsibility for child protection 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 the processing or investigation of child abuse should be processed through the DLP.

Further information on the responsibilities of the DLP can be referred to in Section 3.2 of 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools' (DES 2011).

The DLP acts in cases where there are reasonable grounds for suspicion or where an allegation has been made, as outlined in Section 4.2 of 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (DES 2011).

Furthermore the DLP will:

- Be available to staff for consultation regarding suspicions or disclosures of abuse.
- Maintain proper records in a secure, confidential manner and in a secure location.
- Keep up to date on current developments regarding child protection.
- In conjunction with Caitríona de Rís, organise and co-ordinate a plan for Seachtain an Chairdis in the fourth week of September.
- In conjunction with Caitríona de Rís, organise and co-ordinate the Stay Safe programme in the second term of each school year.
- Circulate a copy of this policy to all school personnel and to the Parents' Association.
- Ensure that the name of the DLP and other relevant support services are displayed in a prominent position near the main entrance to the school.
- Inform the school authority of cases referred to the HSE.
- Inform the school authority of cases where advice was sought 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 board meeting.

#### **Dealing with Disclosures from Children:**

The following procedure applies when a disclosure is made to a staff member or volunteer at An Mhodhscoil.

(1)

- Listen to the child
- Take all disclosures seriously
- Do not ask leading questions or 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 securely.

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(2) The person to whom the child has spoken will report the exchange to the DLP.

(3) If the reporting person or member of the school staff and the DLP are satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion/allegation, a written record of the conversation will be given to the DLP.

The procedures for reporting as laid out in Section 4.2 of 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (DES 2011)' will be strictly adhered to by the DLP.

#### **Allegations or Suspicions Re: School Employees**

The most important consideration for the Chairperson, Board of Management or the DLP is the safety and protection of the child. However Employees also have a right to protection against claims, which are false or malicious.

As employers, the Board of Management should always seek legal advice as the circumstances can vary from one case to another.

There are two procedures to be followed (Section 4.1.3 Page 15 'Child Protection')

- i. The reporting Procedure
- ii. The Procedure for dealing with the Employee.

The DLP has responsibility for reporting the matter to the Health Board. The Chairperson, Board of Management has responsibility, acting in consultation with his/her board, for addressing the employment issues.

If the allegation is against the DLP, the Board of Management Chairperson will assume the responsibility for reporting the matter to the Health Board.

#### **Qualified Privilege**

People making a report to the DLP in good faith have 'qualified privilege' under common law, see 'Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures' (DES 2001, page 6). 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.

#### **Definition and Recognition of Child Abuse**

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types:

- Neglect
- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse

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Each of these categories is defined in full in Appendix 1 ‘Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Circular 0065/DES 2011 Chap.2.1).

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

A list of child abuse indicators is contained in ‘Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Circular 0065/DES 2011 Appendix 1 Chap.2.2).

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

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 BoM Chairperson will assume the responsibility for reporting the matter to the Health Board.

#### **Reporting**

When an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee, the DLP should act in accordance with the procedures outlined in ‘‘Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Circular 0065/DES 2011 Appendix 1 Chap.5).

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.

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 procedures outlined in ‘‘Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Circular 0065/DES 2011 Appendix 1 Chap.5) should be referred to.

The Chairperson and the DLP should make the employee aware privately:

- a. That an allegation has been made against him/her
- b. Of the nature of the allegation
- c. Whether or not the Health Board 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, Health Board 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.

Further follow-up procedures should be observed as outlined in ‘Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures’ (Chapter5).

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**APPENDIX 1: Checklist for Annual Review of the Child Protection Policy**

The Board of Management must 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 BoM may wish to include other items in the checklist that are of particular relevance to [Insert School Name] and reserves the right to do so if/when the need occurs.

1.	As part of the overall review process, Boards of Management should also assess other school policies, practices and activities vis a vis their adherence to the principles of best practice in child protection and welfare as set out in the school's Child Protection policy	YES	NO
2.	Has the Board formally adopted a child protection policy in accordance with the Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	YES	NO
3.	As part of the school's child protection policy, has the Board formally adopted, with modification, the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	YES	NO
4.	Are there both a DLP and a Deputy DLP currently appointed?	YES	NO
5.	Are the relevant contact details (HSE and An Garda Síochána) to hand?	YES	NO
6.	Has the DLP attended available child protection training?	YES	NO
7.	Has the Deputy DLP attended available child protection training?	YES	NO
8.	Have any members of the Board attended child protection training?	YES	NO
9.	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
10.	Has the Board ensured that the Department's "Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools" are available to all school personnel?	YES	NO
11.	Does the Board have arrangements in place to communicate the school's child protection policy to new school personnel?	YES	NO
12.	Is the Board satisfied that all school personnel have been made aware of their responsibilities under the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	YES	NO
13.	Since the Board's last annual review, was the Board informed of any child protection reports made to the HSE/An Garda Síochána by the DLP?	YES	NO
14.	Since the Board's last annual review, was the Board informed of any cases where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report to the HSE was made?	YES	NO
15.	Is the Board satisfied that the child protection procedures in relation to the making of reports to the HSE/ An Garda Síochána were appropriately followed?	YES	NO
16.	Were child protection matters reported to the Board appropriately recorded in the Board minutes?	YES	NO
17.	Is the Board satisfied that all records relating to child protection are appropriately filed and stored securely?	YES	NO
18.	Has the Board ensured that the Parents' Association has been provided with the school's child protection policy?	YES	NO

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## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Child Protection Practices**

The staff and BoM of An Mhodhscoil 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.

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

### **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 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, 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.

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#### **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. A record of all such incidents will be kept and Principal and 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.

#### **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 will be carried out under the direction of the class teacher in an open environment.

#### **Changing for Games/ Swimming**

Pupils will be expected to dress and undress themselves for games and swimming. Under no circumstances will members of staff 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.

An Mhodhscoil will endeavour to have two members of staff at the door of the male changing area and two members of staff in the female changing area.

#### **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.

#### **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.

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#### **Children travelling in staff cars**

It is the duty of parents to organise transport for their child. In exceptional circumstances where parents/guardians are unavailable to transport their child, a minimum of two pupils and two staff members will accompany the child in need of transportation. Members of the school staff will not carry children alone 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 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.

#### **Recruitment and Selection of Staff**

Garda vetting will be required for all staff.

#### **Induction of Staff**

The DLP will be responsible for informing all staff of the Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (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 staff.

#### **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.

#### **Internet Safety**

It is the intention of the Principal and Staff at An Mhodhscoil 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 relevant Stay Safe lessons will be taught in each class.

#### **Supervision**

The school's supervision policy 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 11 o'clock and lunchtime breaks. See Supervision Policy for agreed rules around break-times and procedures around teacher absences.

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**Visibility**

Teachers will ensure that children are visible in the school playground. Children will not be allowed to spend time in classrooms, toilets or sheds 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.