

Patron: Rt. Rev'd Paul Colton
Chairperson: Mr. Stephen Spillane
Principal: Mr. Eddie Pepper
Roll No: 13648D
Registered Charity No: 20111373



The Board of Management,
St. Luke's National School,
O'Mahony's Avenue,
Montenotte, Cork
T23DF30

Child Protection Policy

Introduction

This Policy has been created in line with the most up to date procedures and practices in child protection as are described in The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Revised 2023) which apply to all recognised primary and post-primary schools and to all members of school personnel.

Following engagement between the Department of Education and the Education partners the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 have been revised.

The 2023 procedures have been updated to take account of recent policy and legislative developments which include General Data Protection Regulation, the Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures for Boarding Facilities associated with Recognised Schools 2023 and the Teaching Council (Information to be Furnished by Employer in Case of Dismissal or Resignation of Registered Teacher) Regulations 2023.

The revised procedures are effective from 1 September 2023.

Relevant documents are available at the following links (Right click and select "Open Link"):

[Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools \(Revised 2023\)](#)

[Circular 0036/2023](#)

[Children First Guidance and Legislation](#)

St. Luke's NS and 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. In accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education, *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (Revised 2023)*, this policy has been agreed upon and adopted in St. Luke's NS from 2023/24 school year onwards.

This policy, the *Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures (Revised 2023)*, the *Children First* document (Published in 2017 and amended in 2019) and detailed guidelines and procedures for handling disclosures (See Appendices attached) are available to all staff members on the school website and as part of this document. It is incumbent on all staff members to familiarise themselves with all of these documents and guidelines.

St. Luke's NS has adopted and will fully implement without modification the Department of Education and Skills Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Revised 2023). These procedures will therefore underpin the content of this policy.

Aims

- To create a safe, trusting, responsive and caring environment for all pupils.
- To ensure that all staff are aware of what actions to take when dealing with a child protection issue.
- To develop awareness and responsibility in the area of child protection amongst the whole school community.
- To put in practice procedures to protect all pupils and staff.

Le Chéile, is Féidir Linn

- To ensure that all staff members are aware of and familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures (DES, 2023) and the Children First (Dept. Of Children, 2017) guidelines in relation to reporting concerns and/or disclosures of child abuse.
- To provide for relevant and ongoing training in this and related areas for all school staff.

Key Personnel – Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Deputy DLP The

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

Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Eddie Pepper

The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Siobhán Kelleher

In St. Luke's NS, Eddie Pepper (Principal, appointed by the BoM) is the DLP. Siobhán Kelleher (Deputy Principal) acts as Deputy DLP. Training in these roles has been completed and refresher training on the roles of Mandated Persons will happen on a yearly basis for **ALL STAFF**: Mandated Persons information and links

The DLP has specific responsibility for Child Protection Procedures and will represent the school in all correspondence with Tulsa, 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 3:5)

The DLP acts appropriately where there are reasonable grounds for suspicion or where an allegation has been made.

Principles of Best Practice

In its policies, practices and activities, St. Luke's NS 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 cooperate 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
- Adhere to the above principles in relation to any adult pupil with a special vulnerability

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 will ensure that the necessary policies, protocols or practices as appropriate are in place in respect of each of the aforementioned items/activities.

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

School Measures Taken to Protect the Children in Our Care

We believe that all children have the right to be safe in our society and that we must have in

Le Chéile, is Féidir Linn

place procedures that will help to protect them. This policy addresses the responsibilities of the school in the following areas:

1. Prevention – Education and Curriculum provision.
2. Procedures – For dealing with concerns/disclosures
3. Practice – Best practice in child protection

1. Prevention

Stay Safe Programme

St. Luke's NS will fully implement the Stay Safe Programme. 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 school's 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 school. The Stay Safe programme will be taught **annually** in its entirety from Junior Infants up to Sixth Class. Additional supplementary lessons are available for children with special needs. Information meetings for parents on Child Safety and the Stay Safe Programme may be organised by the school to explain the programme to parents.

Child Protection Policy and Guidelines

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 the school website. The name of the DLP and other relevant support services are displayed in a prominent position near the main entrance to the school. In addition to informing the Manager of the school 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's manager of cases where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report was made. St. Luke's NS will undertake an annual review of its Child Protection Policy and its implementation by the school. A checklist will be used in undertaking the review. The school will address any areas for improvement which might be identified in the annual review. School personnel will be informed that the review has been undertaken. Written notification that the review has been undertaken shall be provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome shall be made available, if requested, to the patron and the DES.

Other SPHE Programmes:

St. Luke's will endeavour to supplement and enhance child protection awareness and prevention by utilising programmes such as the following (not an exhaustive list):

- Walk Tall
- Friends for Life
- Webwise
- Internet Safety based programmes

2. Procedures

- All staff members (teachers, SNA's, ancillary, secretarial, caretaking etc.) in the school will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in the 'Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children' and the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools' (Revised 2023).
- The BOM has appointed Eddie Pepper (Principal) as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Siobhán Kelleher (Deputy Principal) as the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLDP). The DLP has specific responsibility for child protection and will represent the school in all correspondence with the HSE, 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. The DLP acts in cases where there are reasonable grounds for suspicion or where an allegation has been made. It should be noted that the school assumes the role of a

Le Chéile, is Féidir Linn

'reporter' and not an 'investigator'. St. Luke's NS is obliged by law to report any concerns, suspicions or allegations of child abuse or neglect.

- The Board recognises that it has two duties of care. The primary duty is the protection, safety and welfare of the children attending St. Luke's NS. The Board as an employer also has duties and responsibilities towards its employees.
- As an employer, the Board will seek legal advice if an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee.
- Employees may be subject to erroneous or malicious allegations. Any allegation of abuse should be dealt with sensitively. The employee should be treated fairly which includes the right not to be judged in advance of a full and fair enquiry. The Board accepts that the principles of natural justice and fair procedures must be adhered to.
- The Board believes that the academic, personal and social development of children flourishes in a culture where good relationships are encouraged, people feel valued and respected and appropriate support is available for those in difficulty.
- The Board is committed to the maintenance of the environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to express themselves and are listened to. All children in the school will be made aware that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried. In addition, opportunities will be included in the curriculum for children to develop the skills they need to keep them safe.
- The Board undertakes to circulate this Child Protection Policy Statement to all parents and guardians.
- This policy statement regarding Child Protection at St. Luke's NS applies to all staff, members of the Board of Management, volunteers, visitors and contractors working in the school.
- The School Manager/Board of Management will ensure that appropriate, on-going training as necessary will be available to the DLP and DDLP.

The staff and management of this school have agreed:

- All concerns/ disclosures involving children protection/ child welfare issues will be reported in the first instance to the DLP (deputy DLP in their absence).
- Each report to the DLP will be dated and signed by the person making the report (See Appendices for template).
- A strict adherence to maintaining confidentiality – information regarding concerns or disclosures of abuse should only be given on a 'need to know' basis.

(See 'Guidelines and Procedures on Handling Disclosures' and the Appendices attached for more detail)

3. Practice

Certain policies will take particular account of this Child Protection 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.

Garda Vetting

Garda vetting is mandatory for the recruitment and selection of all teaching and non-teaching staff.

Supervision of pupils

- Children will never be left unsupervised at school. The class teacher will always stay with their class (e.g. visitors/ guests/coaches/trips etc). During yard times, teachers on duty will share the supervision of all classes.
- Normally, staff should not be alone in a classroom with one child before or after school. However, some circumstances require one-to-one teaching e.g. in the case of special needs pupils where resource hours and assistance are sanctioned on an

Le Chéile, is Féidir Linn

individual basis. It is school policy that staff in such a situation should work with the classroom door open or within view of a glass area of the classroom door, thus rendering the occupants visible at all times.

- Members of the school staff will not carry children alone in their cars at any time.

Toileting accidents

- Wetting: children will be provided with clean clothes to change themselves. If a child is unable to change without help, a staff member who is Garda vetted and who is familiar to the child may assist the child.
- Soiling: parents will always be contacted for soiling incidents. Clean clothes and wipes will be provided for children who can clean and change themselves. The parents of children who are unable to clean and change themselves will be asked to come to the school to clean and change the child. In the event of the parent being unavailable and with their consent, a staff member who is Garda vetted and who is familiar to the child may help the child to change.

Children with specific toileting/ intimate care needs

In all situations where a pupil needs assistance with toileting/ intimate care, a meeting will be convened, between parents/ guardians, class teacher, special needs assistant, principal and if appropriate the pupil. The purpose of this 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.

Internet and Mobile Phone Use

An Acceptable Use Policy for use of the Internet will be implemented in the school. Mobile Phones – phones may not be used by pupils at any time during the school day, on the school grounds. Teachers/Classroom staff may not use their phone during teaching time unless it is in relation to classroom or school activities or business.

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 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 development stage of the child
- School personnel should avoid doing anything of a personal nature for children that they can do themselves.

Visitors/ Guest Speakers

Visitors/ Guest speakers should never be left alone with the pupils. The school principal/ teachers have a responsibility to check out the credentials of the visitor/ guest speaker and to ensure that the material in use by guests is appropriate and relevant to the curriculum.

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 Tusla or An Garda Síochána should inform a parent/guardian, unless doing so is likely to endanger the

Le Chéile, is Féidir Linn

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 Tusla 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 Tusla intervention is not forthcoming.

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 Tusla or any member of an Garda Síochána

Qualified Privilege

People making a report to the DLP in good faith have 'qualified privilege' under common law. Reports made to Tusla may be subject to provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, 2014. 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

Each of these categories is defined in full in 'Children First' (Dept. of Children) and in the attached appendices.

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

A list of child neglect indicators is contained in Chapter 2:2 of Children First. 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' (2:2)

Handling Disclosures from Children

(DES Procedures 3:3) 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

Le Chéile, is Féidir Linn

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 reporting person and the DLP are 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 (see appendices). The content of the report should follow the guidelines in 'Children First'.

Allegations or Suspicions in relation to School Employees (DES Procedures Chapter 7)

The Chairperson and the DLP are concerned with the protection of the children in their care in the first instance. However, employees must be protected against false and malicious claims. Due process must be observed in relation to allegations against employees. Legal Advice should be sought by the BoM in relation to an allegation in relation to an employee. If the allegation is against the DLP, the BoM Chairperson will assume the responsibility for reporting the matter to Tusla.

Reporting

When an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee, the DLP should act in accordance with the procedures outlined in Children First. 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 and is responsible for liaising with the HSE. The Chairperson assumes responsibility for dealing with the employee.

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 employee should be informed by the Chairperson (Employer) that:

- a. An allegation has been made against him/her
- b. The nature of the allegation
- c. Whether or not Tusla 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, Tusla 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.

SEN and Children with disabilities

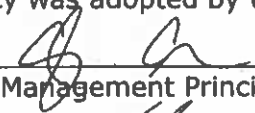
It should be noted that children with disabilities may be more at risk of abuse due to a number of reasons (DES Procedures 2.3.5). Parents, teachers and all staff involved in services for children with disabilities need to be familiar with the indicators of abuse and to be alert for signs of abuse.

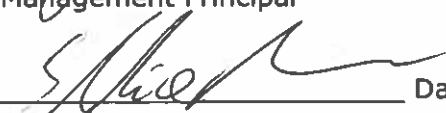
Ratification of Policy, Review and Monitoring

Le Chéile, is Féidir Linn

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year.

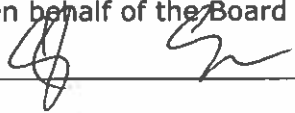
This policy was adopted by the Board of Management in November 2023

Signed:  Signed: 30/4/23 Chairperson of
Board of Management Principal

Date:  Date: 30/9/25 Date of next review:
September 2025

The Board further endorses the Principal, Eddie Pepper as the school DLP and Siobhán Kelleher as Deputy DLP.

On behalf of the Board of Management:

 (Chairperson) Date: 30/9/25

Le Chéile, is Féidir Linn