



Safeguarding Policy

Under section 10 of the Children First Act, 2015 The Board of Management of Saplings Special School has a statutory obligation to ensure, as far as practicable, that children are safe from harm while they are attending the school or while participating in school activities. Saplings Special School recognises our duty of care to pupils and our BOM will always be cognisant of the need for prudent practice from a child protection perspective.

The Board of Management (BOM) recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and must be reflected in all 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 BOM of Saplings Special School has agreed the following child protection policy.

The BOM 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 Mr Michael Wood (School Principal)

The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Nicola Allen (Assistant Principal)

In all its policies, practices and activities, we 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 to include attendance at meetings as mandated by Tusla.
- 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
- The school will also adhere to the above principles in relation to any adult pupil with a special vulnerability

Certain policies such as Saplings Special School Code of Behaviour, Anti-bullying Policy, Attendance Policy and the Supervision of Pupils Policy will take particular account of this Child Protection & Safeguarding 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.

Mandated Persons

The Children First Act, 2015 has placed a statutory obligation on specific people to report child protection concerns that are at or above a threshold of harm (as defined in that Act) to Tusla. Such persons are referred to as “mandated persons” under the Act. All teachers who are registered with the Teaching Council are mandated persons under the Children First Act, 2015.

In accordance with section 2 of the Children First Act, 2015 the defined threshold of “harm” in relation to a child is as follows: “harm” means, in relation to a child;

- assault, ill-treatment or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects or is likely to seriously affect the child’s health, development or welfare
- sexual abuse of the child, whether caused by a single act, omission or circumstance or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances, or otherwise;”

In accordance with section 2 of the Children First Act, 2015 please note the following:

- “ill-treatment” means, in relation to a child, to abandon or cruelly treat the child, or to cause or procure or allow the child to be abandoned or cruelly treated
- “neglect” means, in relation to a child, to deprive the child of adequate food, warmth, clothing, hygiene, supervision, safety or medical care;
- “welfare” includes, in relation to a child, the moral, intellectual, physical, emotional and social welfare of the child.”

Criteria for Mandated Reporting: Threshold of Harm

Under the Children First Act, 2015 registered teachers as mandated persons are required to report to Tusla any knowledge, belief or reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed. The Act defines harm as assault, ill-treatment, neglect or sexual abuse, and covers single and multiple instances.

Neglect

Neglect is defined as “to deprive the child of adequate food, warmth, clothing, hygiene, supervision, safety or medical care”. The threshold of harm, at which a registered teacher as a mandated person has a statutory obligation to report to Tusla under the Children First Act, 2015 is reached when he or she knows, believes or has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child’s needs have been neglected, are being neglected, or are at risk of being neglected to the point where the child’s health, development or welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.

Emotional Abuse/Ill-Treatment

Ill-treatment is defined as: “to abandon or cruelly treat the child, or to cause or procure or allow the child to be abandoned or cruelly treated”. Emotional abuse is covered in the definition of ill-treatment used in the Children First Act, 2015. The threshold of harm, at which a registered teacher as a mandated person has a statutory obligation to report to Tusla under the Children First Act, 2015 is reached when he or she knows, believes or has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being or is at risk of being ill-treated to the point where the child’s health, development or welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is covered in the references to assault in the Children First Act, 2015. The threshold of harm, at which a registered teacher as a mandated person has a statutory obligation to report to Tusla under the Children First Act, 2015 is reached when he or she knows, believes or has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being or is at risk of being assaulted and that as a result the child’s health, development or welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.

Sexual Abuse

A registered teacher as a mandated person who knows, believes or has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being sexually abused has a statutory obligation to report this to Tusla under the Children First Act, 2015. Sexual abuse to be reported under the Children First Act, 2015 [as amended by section 55 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017] is defined as an offence against the child, as listed in Schedule 3 of the Children First Act, 2015.

Dealing with Disclosures from Children

An abused child is likely to be under severe emotional stress. Great care shall be taken not to damage that trust.

When information is offered in confidence, the member of school personnel will need tact and sensitivity in responding to the disclosure. The member of school personnel will need to reassure the child, and endeavour to retain his or her trust, while explaining the need for action 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 or her, but not to make promises that cannot be kept e.g. promising not to tell anyone else. Allegations of abuse or

neglect are dealt with in a sensitive, competent and professional way through listening to and facilitating the child to tell about the problem.

Confidentiality, Sharing of Information and the Offence of Unauthorised Disclosure

Tusla has the authority to share information concerning a child, who is the subject of a risk assessment with a mandated person who has been asked to provide assistance.

Information that Tusla shares with a registered teacher, including a DLP, where that teacher is assisting Tusla to carry out an assessment, must not be shared by the registered teacher with a third party, unless Tusla considers it appropriate and authorises in writing that the information may be shared. This is in keeping with the principles of data protection which recognise that in certain circumstances information can be shared in the interests of child protection, but that such sharing must be necessary and proportionate.

Section 17 of the Children First Act, 2015 makes it an offence for a person to disclose information to a third party which has been shared by Tusla during the course of an assessment arising from a mandated report, save in accordance with law, or unless Tusla has given that person written authorisation to do so. Failure to comply with this section of the Act is an offence liable to a fine or imprisonment for up to six months or both.

Child Protection Practices

The staff and BOM of Saplings Special School have identified the following as areas of specific concern in relation to Child Protection. The following practices should be adopted:

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 developmental stage of the child

Visitors/Guest Speakers

Guest speakers and visiting teachers of varying disciplines, employed by the BOM of Saplings Special School to perform specific duties, will not be left work with a class alone.

Intimate Care Needs

In all situations where a pupil needs assistance with toileting/intimate care, a meeting will be convened, after admission and before the child starts school, between parents/guardians, class teacher, special needs assistant and/or Principal/Deputy 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.

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 such situations, two members of staff should, when possible, be present. A record of all such incidents will be kept and parents will be notified.

Use of School Toilets

The school toilet facilities are not open to the public. Children's toilets are for the sole use of the students of Saplings Special School and are not suitable for parents, visitors or children not attending this school. Our students may use the toilets within the school opening hours. Staff toilets are for staff use only.

Accidents

While every precaution will be taken to ensure the safety of children, we realise that accidents will happen. Accidents will be noted in our Incident/Accident Log File and will be addressed under our First Aid & Accident Procedures.

One-to-one Work

It is the policy in this school that one-to-one work is often in the best interest of the child. Every effort will be made to ensure that this takes place in an open environment.

Changing for games/ PE / Swimming

Pupils will be expected to dress and undress themselves for Games/ PE/ Swimming. Where assistance is needed this will be done in the communal area and with the consent of parents. Under no circumstances will members of staff/ volunteers be expected to or allowed to dress/undress a child in a cubicle/private area alone.. 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 parents.

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. All parents and children will be made aware of attendance rules and their implications as laid down in the Education Welfare Act (2000). The school's Attendance Policy outlines the procedures parents and children should use when contacting the school if there are absences or concerns of an educational/personal/family matter.

Behaviour

Children are encouraged at all times to play co-operatively; inappropriate behaviour will be addressed under our Code of Behaviour and individualised Positive Behaviour Support Plans (PBSP). 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.

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/RSE programmes allow for open pupil-teacher communication, which is hoped will aid the pupil-teacher relationship. Parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the class teacher/principal if they wish to discuss their child's progress.

Internet Safety

It is the intention of the Principal and Staff at Saplings Special School to ensure that child protection concerns will be addressed in the school's Mobile Phone Use and Social Media

Use Policy. Children will be made aware of Internet Safety through class lessons and guest speakers and the school's ICT Policy & Digital Citizenship and Internet Acceptable Use Programmes. The school has purchased a firewall and strong anti-virus software to ensure this.

Record Keeping

Every school keeps records covering a number of matters, about students who have been admitted to the school. Saplings Special School make every effort to adhere to the following principals:

- Information is processed lawfully, fairly, and in a transparent manner
- Information is collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes
- Information collected is adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary for the purpose it is processed
- Information is kept accurate and inaccurate data is rectified without delay;
- Information is kept secure

Supervision

The school's Supervision Policy will be followed by all staff to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children at all times.

Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment

In accordance with section 11 of the Children First Act 2015 and with the requirement of Chapter 8 of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 the following is the Written Risk Assessment of Saplings Special School which was completed January 2020.

The following is the Written Risk Assessment of Saplings Special School:

List of School Activities:

- Morning Drop – off
- Afternoon Collection Times
- Playground Breaks
- Sports Training (Athletics, PE) (Outside on track)
- Sports Training & Dance Classes (in PE Hall)
- Swimming
- Occupational Therapy (in OT Cabin in garden)
- Speech and Language Therapy

- School Excursions

The school has identified the following risk of harm in respect of its activities:

- Traffic congestion & illegal parking
- Presence of 'unknown adults' dropping/collecting children
- Slips/Trips/Falls internally
- Slips/Trips/Falls externally
- External teachers/adults on site (coaching/talks/interventions/therapies)
- Incidence of sudden illness
- Administration of medicines
- Aggressive or violent behaviour in the playground
- Aggressive or violent behaviour towards staff
- Bullying behaviour
- Use of scissors/knives
- Fire
- Access to inappropriate content via digital media
- Cleaning procedures
- Hazardous substances and paraphernalia on site
- Hazardous substances and paraphernalia in the surrounding area
- Outside environment and services

The school has the following procedures in place to address the risks of harm identified in this assessment:

- Clear Policies and Procedures in the following areas:
 1. Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy and Guidelines
 2. Child Protection Policy and Guidelines for external/non teaching staff
 3. Code of Behaviour
 4. Code of Behavior Guidelines for Parents & Adults
 5. Anti Bullying Policy
 6. Critical Incidents Guidelines
 7. Supervision Policy
 8. Well Being Guidelines
 9. Traffic Management Plan

10. SPHE, RSE & Stay Safe Programmes

11. IT & Digital Media Use Policy

- Clear Drop-off and Collection Guidelines.
- Security system and visitor access controls & detailed personnel responsibilities
- Child Protection Training
- Protective resources in clearly signed zone (Medical gloves/goggles etc)
- Health and Safety Training for ancillary staff (annually)
- First Aid Training for staff
- Manual Handling Training
- Regular fire drills & clear exiting practices
- Clear signage and warning notifications
- Playground Inspections

In undertaking this risk assessment, the BOM has endeavoured to identify as far as possible the risks of harm that are relevant to this school and to ensure that adequate procedures are in place to manage all risks identified. While it is not possible to foresee and remove all risk of harm, the school has in place the procedures listed in this risk assessment to manage and reduce risk to the greatest possible extent.

Child Protection Contacts

- Designated Liaison Person: Mr Michael Wood (School Principal)
- Deputy DLP: Nicola Allen
- Kevin Street Garda Station, Dublin 8 Telephone: 01 6669400
- Tusla: Child & Family Agency, Dublin South Central, Lord Edward Street, Dublin 8 Telephone: 01 6486500

*If you would like more details on our Child Protection Procedures; please contact the school through Reception.
January 2020.*

Child Safeguarding Statement

Saplings Special School provides education to pupils from with a primary diagnosis of autism and complex needs..

In accordance with the requirements of the Children First Act 2015, Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017, the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017 and Tusla Guidance on the preparation of Child Safeguarding Statements, the Board of Management of Saplings Special School has agreed the Child Safeguarding Statement set out in this document.

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 2017 as part of this overall Child Safeguarding Statement.

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Mr Michael Wood (School Principal)

The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLDP) is Nicola Allen.

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, procedures, practices and activities. In its policies, procedures, practices and activities, the school 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 comply with its statutory obligations under the Children First Act 2015 and other relevant legislation relating to the protection and welfare of children;
- 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; and
- fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.
- The school will also adhere to the above principles in relation to any pupil with a special vulnerability.

The following procedures/measures are in place:

In relation to any member of staff who is the subject of any investigation (howsoever described) in respect of any act, omission or circumstance in respect of a child attending the school, the school adheres to the relevant procedures set out in Chapter 7 of the Child

Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 and to the relevant agreed disciplinary procedures for school staff which are published on the DES website.

In relation to the selection or recruitment of staff and their suitability to work with children, the school adheres to the statutory vetting requirements of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 and to the wider duty of care guidance set out in relevant Garda vetting and recruitment circulars published by the DES and available on the DES website.

In relation to the provision of information and, where necessary, instruction and training, to staff in respect of the identification of the occurrence of harm (as defined in the 2015 Act) the school:

- Has provided each member of staff with a copy of the school's Child Safeguarding Statement
- Ensures all new staff are provided with a copy of the school's Child Safeguarding Statement
- Encourages staff to avail of relevant training
- Encourages Board of Management members to avail of relevant training
- The Board of Management maintains records of all staff and Board member training

In relation to reporting of child protection concerns to Tusla, all school personnel are required to adhere to the procedures set out in the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017, including in the case of registered teachers, those in relation to mandated reporting under the Children First Act 2015.

In this school the Board has appointed the above named DLP: Mr Michael Wood as the "relevant person" (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) to be the first point of contact in respect of the child safeguarding statement.

All registered teachers employed by the school are Mandated Persons under the Children First Act 2015.

In accordance with the Children First Act 2015, the Board has carried out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child while attending the school or participating in school activities. A written assessment setting out the areas of risk identified and the school's procedures for managing those risks is attached as an appendix to these procedures.

This statement has been published on the school's website and has been provided to all members of school personnel, the Parents' Association (if any) and the patron. It is readily accessible to parents and guardians on request. A copy of this Statement will be made available to Tusla and the Department if requested.

This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed annually or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this statement refers.

This Child Safeguarding Statement was reviewed by the Board of Management in January 2020.

J. H. Donohue
Chairperson
26/05/2021