



Stay Safe Policy

■ Rationale

Child abuse has no boundaries. It occurs at every socioeconomic level, crosses ethnic and cultural lines, and is found in all religions and all levels of education. The role of schools in prevention education is increasingly recognised as imperative to the introduction of vulnerabilities of children to abuse. The Stay Safe Programme aims to increase well-being and resilience by giving children knowledge, skills and strategies in an age appropriate manner, using developmentally structured lessons and resources to empower them.

■ Introductory Statement

The staff, parents and management of St. Mary's BNS, Ferrybank, have developed and agreed this policy in line with current recommendations and guidelines relating to Child Protection Procedures for Primary Schools and our school's Anti- Bullying and SPHE policy.

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.

Copies of this policy document and Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures will be made available to all staff. It is incumbent on all staff to familiarise themselves with 'Children First' and the Department of Education and Science Child Protection Guidelines & Procedures.

■ Aims

This policy aims to:

1. Create a safe, trusting, responsive and caring environment by valuing each child's contribution and work through praise and encouragement.
2. Provide a personal safety skills education which specifically addresses abuse and prevention for all children in the school. The children in our care may not always or may not be capable of talking about their problems. All staff should observe and spend time to get to know the children and how they may hide their worries and problems.
3. Develop awareness and responsibility in the area of child protection amongst the whole school community.

4. Put in place procedures for good practice to protect all children and staff.
5. Ensure all staff members are aware of and familiar with the 'Children First' and the Department of Education and Science Guidelines and Procedures in relation to reporting concerns and / or disclosures of child abuse and bullying.
6. Provide for ongoing training in this and related areas for all school staff.

■ Prevention

St. Mary's BNS uses the Stay Safe programme to provide education for children on abuse prevention. Curricular provision can be achieved through the full implementation of the Stay Safe programme as part of the school's SPHE curriculum, under the Strand unit Safety and Protection.

Staff will make every effort to ensure that the messages of the programme are reinforced whenever possible.

Parents will be informed of school policy in relation to Stay Safe programme

■ Procedures

All staff (Teachers, SNAs, ancillary, secretarial, caretaker etc.) in this school will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in the '*Children First*' and the Department of Education and Science document, '*Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017*.'

The Board of Management of this school has appointed James Robinson as Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Corinna Quillinan as Deputy DLP.

The staff and management of this school have agreed:

Mandated persons have two main legal obligations under the *Children First Act 2015*

- To report harm of children, above a defined threshold, to Tusla
- To assist Tusla, if requested, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report

In any situation where a member of school personnel (including a registered teacher), receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused or neglected, is being abused or neglected, or is at risk of abuse or neglect, he or she shall will, without delay, report the

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matter to the designated liaison person (DLP) in accordance with the procedures outlined in chapter 5 of the procedures. (3.1.1 Child Protection Guidelines).

- All concerns / disclosures involving child protection /child welfare issues will be reported in the first instance to the DLP (Deputy DLP where appropriate).
- Each report to the DLP will be dated and signed by the person making that report.
- A strict adherence to maintaining confidentiality – information regarding concerns or disclosures of abuse should only be given on a ‘need to know’ basis.

The staff and management of this school recognise the children’s rights and will treat them with dignity and respect by:

1. Not accepting threatening, violent or degrading behaviour.
2. Telling children their rights and responsibilities.
3. Treating the children as individuals.
4. Involving children.
5. Making time for children to talk.
6. The right for all non-verbal children to communicate using an alternative communication system.

■ **Stay Safe Programme**

It is the policy of the school that the Stay Safe Programme is taught each year over a five week period with the pupils. Children are taught the content of the Stay Safe Lessons in the classroom. Teachers and parents work together to ensure that children learn the skills they need to keep safe.

Personal safety skills to be taught are as follows:

- About feelings; recognise the importance of feelings, how to express them appropriately and to recognise unsafe feelings.
- About friendship: making and keeping friends and the value of friendship.
- About Bullying; What bullying is, strategies for dealing with bullying behaviour, and that it is never acceptable to bully others.
- The importance of building confidence and self-esteem.
- How to identify and deal with inappropriate or unsafe touch.
- That it is ok to say ‘no’ to an adult in a situation where they feel unsafe, threatened or frightened.

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- To identify trusted adults whom they should tell if they are feeling frightened, threatened, worried or unsafe in any way.
- To understand how someone might bribe, trick or threaten them to keep it a secret.
- It is never their fault if they are victimised or abused.
- That they should never go anywhere with or take anything from a stranger.
- Appropriate language for telling.

The Stay Safe Programme is developmentally tailored and contains four sets of lessons suitable for infants, 1st/2nd, 3rd/ 4th and 5th/6th classes. The lesson plans are divided into five Stay Safe topics. This approach is compatible with the SPHE curriculum with content based on process and establishing patterns of behaviour.

1. Feeling Safe and Unsafe.
2. Friendship and Bullying.
3. Touches.
4. Secrets and Telling.
5. Strangers.

The processes, approaches and information adopted are designed to reflect the needs of the children at a particular time and at their various stages of readiness.

■ **Links to other Policy / Planning Areas**

Prevention: SPHE curriculum, Strand Unit on Safety & Protection

Procedures: Anti Bullying Policy, Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment, Health and Safety Policy.

Practice: Good practice currently protects teachers and children. Swimming and games- a male teacher is always available to supervise under current staffing arrangements. Special Education Teachers - most support is within the classroom and withdrawal from classrooms takes place generally in groups. If individual tuition is necessary, there is a glass panel in all doors to protect teachers and pupils.

■ **Review and Monitoring**

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Board of Management in two years. The Board of Management will ensure that adequate training and support is provided for all staff.

■ **Ratification and Communication**

The Board of Management of St. Mary's BNS ratified this plan on 26th November 2019 and is available to parents on request.

Signed _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date _____