

Addendum to St Anne's PS Child Protection Policy Covid-19 Arrangements for Safeguarding and Child Protection

CONTEXT

From 20 March 2020 the Northern Ireland Executive asked parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and asked schools to remain open only for the children of key workers and for children who are vulnerable.

The current national health concerns relating to Covid-19 create uncertainty in the lives of children and young people. Daily routines, family life, friendship groups and the safe space that schools provide have been disrupted. For many families and children, this will bring additional challenge, and for some this will be an additional Safeguarding risk factor.

A Trauma-Informed Response

An accumulation of different factors, including household financial stress, parental ill-health, isolation from support networks and intra-family conflict, may mean that the past few months have been traumatic for some children. They may have experienced sudden, unwanted change, over which they have no control. This may include the absence of friends, the absence of significant relationships with certain adults and a lack of routine, structure and order. Others may have experienced bereavement, isolation, fear, emotionally-dysregulated adults, poverty and increased risk of domestic abuse.

It is important that the adults responsible for safeguarding children are sensitive to their physical, social and emotional needs in these most unusual circumstances.

We need to ensure that children have safe spaces to talk about their experiences during the lockdown and beyond. We need to ensure that all children have access to trusted adults who will listen to them and who are ready and trained to respond effectively to them.

It is critically important that children who are, or may be, at risk are identified, so that a proportionate, compassionate and sensitive response can be made.

We need to remember that it may take a long time for children to reveal any worries, trauma, distress or abuse. They may communicate these through behaviour and other indicators, rather than through disclosure. All staff need to be aware of this and able to respond appropriately and immediately.

PROCEDURES

Staff will continue to follow the procedures outlined in our school's Child Protection Policy, which is available on our school website.

In addition, the following arrangements have been put in place to support families and monitor pupil safety and well-being.

- In preparation for the return of pupils to school, the Designated Teacher for Child Protection has provided specific Covid-19-related Safeguarding and Child Protection Training to staff.
- Staff have attended a focused workshop on supporting pupils' emotional well-being on their return to school. This explored the possible issues and challenges that children may present with and identified strategies and supports that can be used to manage these.
- Children will have access to the counselling service provided through the school, as appropriate and where available.
- If this service is oversubscribed, parents will be signposted to other agencies within the community where they can access support for their child.
- The counsellor facilitated by the school will also provide guidance and resources to staff to help them support pupils' emotional well-being.
- Safeguarding messages and how pupils can share concerns or worries will be regularly re-visited. Posters will be displayed signposting pupils to trusted adults and support agencies.
- The school has a dedicated COVID-19 tab on its school website <https://saintannesps.com/school-documents>

This provides guidance, information and support for parents on a range of issues, along with signposting links to appropriate websites which families may find useful during the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. These include

- [Keeping-Children-Safe-Online](#)
- DENI-Safer-Schools-NI-App-for-parents
- [Online-Safety-Thinkuknow-Parents-Helpsheet](#)
- [Parent-Line-NI-Helplines](#)
- [Parent Carer Primary Letter SaferSchoolsNi](#)
- [www.helplinesni.com](#)
- [https://www.camhs-resources.co.uk/coronavirus](#)
- [www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/support-parents-and-pupils](#)
- [https://www.ncb.org.uk/news-opinion/news-highlights/making-most-family-time-during-covid-19-lockdown](#)
- [http://www.cypsp.hscni.net/download/documents/CYPSP-Resource-Pack-2020.pdf](#)
[https://view.pagetiger.com/kgbmzm/1](#)

ONLINE SAFETY

We would remind everyone to stay safe when using online resources and to report any concerns to a member of the Safeguarding Team.

Information and support for parents on keeping children safe online can also be found under the COVID-19 tab on our school website. <https://saintannesps.com/school-documents>

In order to ensure the safety of all involved, the following guidance should be followed if staff and pupils are engaging in online teaching/communication through platforms recommended by, and available via, C2K. C2k (formerly known as Classroom 2000) is the Northern Ireland-wide information and communications network operated on behalf of the Northern Ireland Education Authority. C2k is responsible for providing all schools in Northern Ireland with internet and other services to support the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

- Teachers will provide online learning via Google Classroom with strict procedures in place to minimise risk.
- Pupils must agree not to share login details or passwords with anyone else.
- The platform is limited to use by pupils and teachers. For parents wishing to communicate with a class teacher or a member of staff, the main school office should be their first port of call. Main Office Tel. 02890615414. Email: info@stannes.belfast.ni.sch.uk.
- A disclosure or concern over any online forum will be followed up, as it would be in school.
- If there is a breach of any of these procedures, e.g. a pupil gives the password to someone else who joins the group, the teacher should immediately advise the Principal.

HOW A PARENT CAN RAISE AN ISSUE OR EXPRESS A CONCERN

We welcome parents asking for advice and help if they have concerns about their child's well-being or safety. Asking for help is a protective factor and parental concerns and requests for help will always be taken seriously.

Any member of staff will listen carefully to parental concerns and ensure that the request for help, if necessary, is brought to the attention of a member of the Safeguarding Team. In this case, a decision can be made as to how best to provide help.

The school email address and main school phone number are available on our school website: www.stannesps.com

We welcome parents and guardians making contact with the school with any concerns, issues or queries they may have.

Any person who has a concern in relation to their child or another child can also follow the guidance and advice **detailed on page 14 of this Policy**.

HOW A CHILD CAN RAISE A CONCERN.

We know that while many children will have enjoyed their time at home, there may be others who have felt scared and lonely. There may be others who experienced increased anxiety and who may have been exposed to an increased Safeguarding risk. Our Safeguarding responsibility to all our children continues, whether the school is open or again closed and we will seek to maintain contact with our children and young people as well as signpost them to other agencies.

We will use the following means to connect with our pupils and their parents when they are not in school:

- Respond to pupil comments and queries via Google Classroom.
- Respond to any concerning comments our young people post on Google Classroom following the school's normal Safeguarding procedures and policy.
- During periods of school closure, and in line with the information previously provided to schools by the Education Authority's Child Protection Support Service (CPSS), teachers may make phone calls to parents. These will be pastoral in nature and a record will be kept of any issues reported by parents. Any concerns around pupil well-being will be shared without delay with a member of the Safeguarding Team.
- All our children will be given an email address and school phone number to allow them to connect with school.
- Use of the Safer Schools App

MONITORING AND REVIEW

In line with Departmental guidance and advice, the Safeguarding Team will review and amend these arrangements regularly during the period of Covid-19.

SIGNED: Eadaoin OCarroll	Designated Teacher
SIGNED: Michael Keenan	Principal
SIGNED: Brendan Morgan	Chair of Board of Governors
DATE: 9/09/20	