

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Policy

The BOM is committed to securing high standards of health and safety in and around the school. It strives at all times to create a working and learning environment that is safe and healthy for all that use it, namely staff, pupils, parents/guardians and relevant members of the public. The school will apply the provisions of all applicable health, safety and welfare legislation and codes of practice to ensure that places and systems of work are safe and without risk to health. Continuous improvements in health and safety performance will be sought, but interventions will reflect the reality of identified risks.

Procedures

1 Responsibilities

1.1 BOM

The BOM is the employer of the school's staff. As such, it has overall responsibility for ensuring healthy and safe places and systems of work for staff, as well as a duty of care to all other building users, whether they use the building/grounds during the school day or outside of school times.

The BOM will ensure that an up-to-date Safety Statement is in place and displayed prominently in the school. It will undertake a risk assessment at least once per year and will ensure that identified hazards are eliminated or minimised as far as is reasonably practical. The BOM will devote sufficient resources to ensuring health and safety in the school and will ensure that there is adequate insurance in place to cover the activities of the school. The BOM will appoint at least one competent person to assure health and safety compliance. This may be an external expert or a BOM member, but not the Principal or Teachers' Representative on the BOM. The BOM will sanction relevant health and safety training for this person if necessary.

1.2 Principal and Deputy Principal

The Principal is the link between the BOM and the staff. The Principal will ensure that all staff, including temporary and part-time staff, receive induction, ongoing training and regular information on health and safety matters and will consult with them, on behalf of the BOM, at least annually on such matters. The Principal will support and assist staff to enable them to reach correct decisions about health and safety and will check at intervals that safe working methods are being observed that are in accordance with school and statutory procedures. She will also receive and deal initially with any health and safety concerns that she receives from staff, parents/guardians and others.

The Deputy Principal will take on the duties of the Principal in her absence.

1.3 Other employees

All staff, including temporary and part-time staff, are required to cooperate with the BOM and others to ensure health and safety law in general, and this policy in particular, are implemented. They have responsibility to take reasonable care of their own safety, health and welfare and that of any person who may be affected by their acts or omissions. This applies to any work they do on behalf of the school, both within the school premises and outside. Specifically in terms of child welfare, teachers are *in loco parentis* and are expected to do what a reasonably careful parent would do in any situation involving risk.

Staff are required to attend any health and safety training that is deemed essential by the BOM and are encouraged to undertake appropriate additional training. All training must be delivered by individuals/organisations competent to do so. Records of all health and safety training completed will be maintained by the school.

Staff must use available facilities and equipment and other forms of protection to ensure work practices are performed in the safest manner possible and must never intentionally or recklessly interfere with or misuse any such facilities, equipment or protection. Staff may not be under the influence of an intoxicant to the extent that it endangers their own or another person's safety and must inform the Principal if they are suffering from any injury, disease or illness that adds to risks within the school. Any dangerous practices or situations that staff become aware of must be reported to the Principal and/or staff Safety Representative without unreasonable delay.

1.4 Staff Safety Representative

Employees are entitled and encouraged to elect annually a Safety Representative who will have the right to:

- Represent employees on health and safety matters
- Inspect the place of work on health and safety grounds
- Investigate accidents and dangerous occurrences
- Investigate health and safety complaints made by employees
- Accompany a health and safety inspector carrying out an inspection
- Make representations to, and receive information from, an inspector
- Make representations to the BOM on health and safety matters
- Liaise with other relevant persons engaged in health and safety matters
- Receive appropriate training for this role.

If desired by the staff, the Principal will facilitate the establishment of a staff safety committee.

1.5 Parents and guardians

Parents and guardians are requested to cooperate with the BOM and others to ensure health and safety law in general, and this policy in particular, are implemented. They have responsibility to take reasonable care of their own safety, health and welfare and that of any person who may be affected by their acts or omissions. Parents are especially reminded that they must not allow their children to engage in dangerous play in and around the school. Once a pupil enters the school building, the teachers are *in loco parentis* and thus primarily responsible for the child's health, safety and welfare. Parents and guardians, however, must take specific responsibility for other children, especially young children, accompanying them in the school and its environs.

Parents and guardians who are directly or indirectly involved with any meetings, events, extra-curricular activities, etc, are required to adhere to any health and safety regulations set out for these activities.

Parents and guardians are requested to report any health and safety concerns to the Principal and/or the Chairperson of the BOM. Additionally, or alternatively, they may raise any concerns with the Chairperson of the Parents' Association Committee. Parents and guardians are also entitled to receive information on, and be consulted on, this document.

1.6 Pupils

Pupils will be advised of any relevant health and safety procedures and are required to comply with the staff and BOM in implementing these.

1.7 Members of the public

Members of the public who visit the school or hire the school will be informed of any relevant health and safety regulations in place and will be required to abide by these. Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that any outside contractors used by the school are covered by adequate insurance and comply with health, safety and welfare legislation.

2 Emergencies

2.1 Emergency routes and exits

The school has, and will maintain, an adequate number of emergency routes and exits, which meet statutory regulations. These will be clearly signed and kept free from obstruction at all times. All rooms will have evacuation instructions on the inside of each door. School evacuation will be practised as part of regular fire drills.

2.2 Fire protection

The school has, and will maintain, appropriate fire detection and firefighting equipment, which meets statutory obligations. Fire drills will be held at least three times per school year. A fire safety audit will be done as part of the school's general health and safety risk assessment. Staff will be trained in the use of firefighting equipment. A fire register will be maintained that includes records of daily checks of means of escape routes, monthly checks of fire extinguishers and all fire drills.

Any contractor completing hot work (including welding, soldering, use of blow lamps, blow torches and cutting equipment) must be qualified to do so, must have a hot works permit, must carry a fully charged fire extinguisher and must make a full check one hour after completion of the work.

2.3 Emergency contact details

Emergency contact details of the parents and guardians of all children in the school, as well as the next of kin of all staff, will be kept in the school office. These will be updated regularly.

2.4 First aid

The school recognises the importance of taking the appropriate measures in cases of accidents and injury, including, where necessary, securing the site and immediately telephoning the emergency services.

The school accepts that it needs a minimum of one occupational first aider, whose certification is renewed every two years. Certification details will be kept in the school office. The school also accepts that ideally, the number of occupational first aiders within the school community should be higher. If available, occupational first aiders will administer any first aid in the first instance. However, in the absence of such a person, any competent adult will make every effort to attend to an injured person.

There are eleven first aid boxes in the school, one located in each classroom, one in the staff room and two for the yard. The boxes kept in the classrooms contain tissues, latex gloves, still water, paper cups and sick bags. The first aid box in the staff room is stocked in accordance with guidelines issued by the Health and Safety Authority. Medication may never be stored in first aid boxes.

2.5 Investigation, recording and reporting

It is important that all instances of ill health, accident and 'near miss' that result from compromised health and safety circumstances are recorded and investigated, to ensure relevant lessons are learnt for the future. To this end, the school maintains a logbook of all such instances, which is kept in the Principal's office. The Principal will report on these at the next meeting of the BOM (and sooner to the Chairperson of the BOM if the instance is deemed sufficiently serious). Any incident involving a child will also be notified on the day itself to the relevant parent/guardian, ordinarily by the class teacher.

Furthermore, the Principal will make a report to the Health and Safety Authority in the case of dangerous occurrences, death or serious accidents (that is, an accident requiring absence from work/school for more than three days, not including the day of the accident itself, or requiring medical treatment by a registered medical practitioner or hospital). Additionally, the Principal will make a report to the school's insurance company.

2.6 Emergency closures

In the event of, for instance, heavy snowfall, high winds, thunderstorms, disconnection of services, death or critical incident, the Principal will consult as soon as feasible with the Chairperson of the BOM to decide whether it is in the interests of all parties to close the school. If it is decided that it would be unsafe to keep the school open, an exceptional closure will be deemed to have been granted by the BOM. Exceptional closures will be kept to an absolute minimum. Parents and guardians will be informed at the earliest opportunity of any such closure using a range of communication techniques (SMS, email, telephone calls, posting on school website, message on school voicemail, note at school gate, etc). If school is open when an incident occurs, staff will remain on the premises until all children have been collected.

3. Safety

3.1 Traffic management

The school recognises that great numbers of staff, pupils, parents, guardians, community centre users and other members of the public travel within the direct vicinity of the school. They ordinarily arrive and leave at concentrated times of the day using different modes of transport, which poses enormous safety concerns. The BOM wants traffic in and around the school to be managed as safely as possible, but this requires the full cooperation of all parties concerned. Staff, parents/guardians and children are informed on an ongoing basis that car parking inside the school grounds is restricted to staff, that pedestrians may only use the fenced pedestrian gate and walkway and that extreme caution must be exercised by everyone, especially in areas where vehicles and pedestrians mix. The cooperation of the adjoining community centre shall be sought and the local authority shall be approached in order to find engineering solutions to the parking and vehicular movement problems. In instances of illegal road usage, the school may inform the local Garda station.

3.2 Safe access and egress routes

Every effort will be made to ensure that all building users can safely access, egress and move around the school grounds and building. Entrances and corridors will be kept free from obstruction. Mobility aids are always permitted, but bicycles, buggies and similar may not be brought into the school building. The front entrance will ordinarily be used only by staff and visitors to the school.

3.3 Children arriving at school

School opens at 8.50. Unless otherwise indicated by staff, the side gate is unlocked and children enter by the side door, from which they must make their way directly and quietly to their classroom where their teacher will be waiting for them. Junior and senior infant children must be dropped to their classrooms by their parents or guardians. Ordinarily, the side door will be locked and the side gate will be closed at 9.10. Anyone arriving after this time will be required to use the front door to access the school.

3.4 Children leaving school

Parents or guardians of children in junior and senior infants must collect them from their classrooms at 13.30 (or earlier in the case of early closure). Pupils using the Half One Club will be taken there from their classrooms. Parents and guardians of these children must collect them at 14.25 from the front door. First to sixth class children are dismissed from their classrooms at 14.30 and must leave the school from the side door.

Pupils will be reminded on an ongoing basis that if they are not collected on time, they must make their way to the front door where school staff will attend to their immediate safety needs.

If pupils need to leave school early (for example, for a dental appointment), the parents or guardians must make every effort to notify the school in advance. If a person other than a parent or guardian is collecting the child, the parent/guardian must give written permission to the class teacher (unless it is an emergency situation, in which case the school office may be contacted by telephone). If a child is to leave alone, the school's authorisation must be sought. Any child who leaves early must be signed out from their classroom/the yard prior to leaving the premises.

3.5 Supervision of children during the school day

To ensure children remain inside the school premises during the school day, measures will be taken to ensure children cannot exit by themselves. Similarly, measures will be taken to ensure that uninvited persons do not enter the school.

Children are supervised throughout the school day by their class teachers and/or colleagues. If class teachers are absent, deputies are assigned immediately and children may be divided up between the other classes for the school day. In cases of longer absences, substitute teachers may be engaged.

On occasion, a teacher may have to leave the classroom for a short period of time. If so, s/he will ensure that a colleague will provide temporary supervision cover. Sometimes children may be allowed to leave their classrooms for limited periods of time, normally in pairs, to undertake specific errands.

During yard time, two class teachers will ordinarily supervise the school yards, assisted by the school's Special Needs Assistants (SNAs). One SNA will always be on duty inside during break times. The yard supervision rota will be displayed in the staff room. If the weather is inclement, children will remain in their classrooms for quiet activities.

Particular care will be taken during activities that are more likely to pose potential hazards, such as outdoor play during icy conditions, physical education and arts and crafts. Parents and guardians are requested to ensure that their children attend school in appropriate clothing and footwear and that they do not wear loose jewellery at any time.

3.6 School excursions

Safety is taken very seriously during all excursions away from the school grounds, whether local or further afield. Wherever possible, a small number of parents and guardians will be asked to accompany school groups on excursions. They may not bring younger children with them.

Where transport is required, the school will hire buses that are adequate for the size of the group from a reputable company that provides safe vehicles and drivers. Only buses that have seat belts for all participants of the school excursion will be used and all passengers will be required to make use of these.

Pupils are paired up for each excursion and must follow their teacher's orders at all times. A teacher or other responsible adult always leads the way and the group is required to stay together, using waiting points where necessary. Children are counted when leaving school and at various points during the excursion.

Specifically in the case of swimming, teachers will inspect the changing rooms on arrival and children will be required to get ready for the pool quickly. They may not run and must not enter the pool until the instructor gives the go ahead. No shampoos, soaps, deodorants, body sprays or similar may be used.

3.7 Other

The school will provide safe equipment for both its staff and pupils, including where necessary, guards and appropriate personal protective equipment. Equipment will be appropriately certified, maintained to a high standard and disposed of if it poses a safety risk. Electrical equipment will only be used and maintained by staff qualified to do so. Wherever possible, fuses and power breakers shall be used and all portable power equipment shall operate on 110V.

Equipment and substances for maintenance, cleaning, catering and similar will be stored securely away from children. Cleaning and maintenance will normally be done outside of school hours.

Appropriate training will be provided in the safe handling and use of equipment and hazardous substances. This will include training in manual handling, which will focus on: avoidance of manual handling wherever possible, reduction of manual handling through the use of mechanical aids and the sharing of loads, and skills for safe manual handling. Work at height will be avoided wherever possible and must never take place without other people being on the premises. Safe ladder practice must be observed and ordinary school furniture must never be used to undertake work at height.

4 Health

4.1 Facilities

The building and grounds will be maintained on an ongoing basis according to a defined maintenance schedule. The school will adhere to, and exceed where possible, statutory regulations regarding asbestos, room dimensions, air space, freedom of movement, temperature, ventilation, light and other general welfare matters. Good levels of hygiene will be observed, including regular cleaning and collection of litter. Any spills and the like will be dealt with immediately. Warm water, soap and towels will be made available at every sink. Taps dispensing drinking water are clearly marked throughout the school. Appropriate attention will be given to the design and use of work stations and audiovisual displays including computer screens and interactive whiteboards. Smoking will not be allowed anywhere in the school and its grounds.

4.2 Illness

Parents and guardians will be required to complete a form listing any long-term allergies and illnesses that their children suffer from when enrolling in school (this includes any plaster allergies or similar). This will also include information about what can and cannot be done in an emergency situation. Copies of these forms will be kept in the files of the relevant class teachers, Principal, Deputy Principal and in the school office. A medical information display will also be maintained in the staff room. All staff are also requested to provide this information. Appropriate provisions will be made for any person who takes ill in school, including taking the individual to the doctor or hospital if deemed necessary.

4.3 Administration of medicines

Any medication belonging to a child is kept in a secure and clearly visible location in the child's classroom. Asthma inhalers for children from second to sixth class are kept in their own bags, however.

No teacher will be required to administer medicines or to supervise children taking medicines. If teachers are willing to do so, specific authorisation will be given in writing by the BOM.

Parents and guardians of children requiring medication will need to fill in a form. They will also be required to complete an indemnity form in respect of any liability that may arise from the administration of medication. They will inform the teacher(s) how the medication should be administered. Parents and guardians will have responsibility to check that the authorised teacher(s) is/are in school, that the teacher(s) has/have the medication on trip/swimming days, and that the medication is available and in date.

If at all possible, any medication should be self-administered, under the supervision of an authorised adult. A written record of the date and time of administration will be filled out by the teacher and put in the child's class medical file on the same day (with the exception of asthma inhalers). The child's parent/guardian will be informed on the same day that medication has been administered.

4.4 Communicable disease

In the case of any infectious disease, parents and guardians will be informed as soon as possible and appropriate action will be taken by the Principal and BOM to limit the associated risks.

4.5 Health promotion

The school will promote safe and healthy living, both through the curriculum and in other ways. For example, walking and cycling to school will be encouraged and guidelines will be issued to parents and guardians about the content of healthy lunch boxes.

5 Other welfare issues

5.1 Animals

No animals may be brought into the school grounds at any time, with the exception of assistance dogs.

5.2 Other policies

Child protection, dignity at work (employment) and play are dealt with in separate school policies.

6 Review

This policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis. Health and safety risk assessments will take place at least annually, and sooner if circumstances require this. If necessary, this policy and these procedures will be amended as a result of these audits, and shall in any case undergo full review in 2015.

Health and safety risk assessments

Available at reception in school.

Approved by the BOM on 30 August 2011