



## Child Protection Policy and Guidelines

The management of the Slaney Language Centre (SLC) recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of a school life and must be reflected in all of the school's policies, practises 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 Management of the SLC has agreed the following child protection policy:

- 1) The Management 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.
- 2) The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is **Lisa Bartsch**.
- 3) The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is **Kristina Arthurs**.
- 4) In its policies, practices and activities will SLC adhere to the following principles of best practice in child protection and welfare  
The SLC 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.
  - Adopt safe practice 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.
- 5) SLC policies include a Code of Behaviour, Anti bullying Policy, Pupil Attendance Strategy, Supervision of Pupils, Sporting Activities/School Outings/Pupil Work Placements as post primary etc. The Management has ensured that the necessary policies, protocols or practices as appropriate are in place in respect of each of the above listed items.
- 6) This policy has been made available to school personnel and is readily accessible to parents on request.
- 7) This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every year.

This policy was adopted by the Management on **16 August 2016**.

## Child Protection Procedure

The safety and well-being of children/students is a priority in our school.

If school personnel have concerns that children with whom they have contact, may have been abused or neglected or are being abused or neglected, or are at risk of abuse or neglect, they shall report it without delay to the Designated Liaison Person (Lisa Bartsch).

All school personnel will be directed and given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the Duty of Care Fact sheet by the Department of Health and Children:

[http://www.dcyh.gov.ie/documents/publications/ODTC\\_FactSheets\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.dcyh.gov.ie/documents/publications/ODTC_FactSheets_Eng.pdf)

All school staff in contact with junior students are to

- a) have accredited compliance in relation to Garda vetting of school personnel (through MEI) or
- b) undertake application for such compliance within their first week of employment.

All host families in contact with junior students are to have accredited compliance in relation to Garda Vetting of host families (through MEI)

Using thorough recruitment procedures (such as seeking and following up of references and ensuring that any unexplained gaps in employment records/CVs are satisfactorily accounted for) are an essential element of good child protection practice.

### Definition of a Child or Vulnerable Adult

**Children** : People under 18 years of age . **Vulnerable adults** : A person aged 18 years or over, who is in receipt of or may be in need of services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

### Definition of Abuse

Abuse can be by neglect be emotional, physical or sexual (please see appendix A for more comprehensive definitions and symptoms of abuse.

### Reporting Procedure

- a) Contact the Designated Liaison Person (Lisa Bartsch) in confidence. If the accusation involves the DLP, then it should be made to the Deputy DLP (Kristina Arthurs)
- b) The DLP will liaise with relevant parties (HSE) to determine what further action is necessary in line with protocols contained in the (Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools document. – Department of Education)
- c) If the accusation involves an employee, the Management will undertake to assess the situation using protocols from the same.
- d) All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse and neglect should be shared only on a 'need to know' basis in the interest of the child. If sharing the information is central to protecting the child from harm then this must be prioritised over all other concerns, including confidentiality. It is important that if a child shares information about abuse that they are not given the impression that it will not be passed on.

- e) It is not our responsibility to investigate, assess or determine if abuse has occurred. It is our responsibility to record the information of concern and communicate this to the Statutory Authority (HSE).
- f) All disclosures and suspicions must be reported to the Statutory Authorities i.e. HSE staff and An Garda Siochana.

**In making a report on suspected or actual abuse, the individual should ensure that the first priority is always the safety and welfare of the child and/or vulnerable adult. In emergency situations, the information should be communicated directly.**

### Protection for Persons reporting Chld Abuse

The main provisions in the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 are:

- The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of the HSE or any member of An Garda Siochana.
- The provision of significant protection for employees who report child abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to, and including, dismissal.
- The creation of an offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities 'knowing that the statement to be false'. This is a criminal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious report.

### Allegations concerning employees

School employees may be subject to erroneous or malicious allegations.

Therefore any allegation of abuse or neglect shall be dealt with sensitively and support, including counselling, will be provided for staff where necessary. The *Employee Assistance Service* for teachers may be in a position to offer assistance to teachers. The employee shall be treated fairly which includes the right not to be judged in advance of a full and fair enquiry. Where necessary, legal advice will be taken by the school.

In certain instances, Management is authorised to direct an employee to immediately absent himself/herself from the school until the matter has been considered by the employer. The employee will be invited to a meeting with the manager, the purpose of which is to inform the employee of the allegation and the action being taken. The employee may be accompanied by an appropriate person of his or her choice and will be so advised. In any event, the employee will also be advised of the matter, in writing.

### Role of Designated Liaison Person:

To ensure reports of abuse are taken seriously and recorded accurately.

To inform parents/guardians of the report-once to do so would not further endanger the child.

To keep a record of all such communications.

To assess the seriousness of reports of abuse.

To liaise with the HSE Children and Family Social Services (Duty Social Worker: 053-9123522, ext. 201 and 219) in determining if the situation warrants a full report. In all cases, where a person seeks the advice of the HSE about whether or not a matter should be reported to the HSE, the HSE is required to provide such advice.

To contact HSE CFSS and/or Gardai immediately if any child is in imminent danger of abuse.

To act as a resource for any staff with child protection concerns.

## Appendix A. Definition of Abuse and Recognising Abuse

**Abuse of vulnerable adults** can constitute the physical, psychological, emotional, financial or sexual maltreatment or neglect of a vulnerable adult by another person. The abuse may be a single act or repeated over a period of time, it may take one form or a multiple of forms. The lack of appropriate action can also be a form of abuse.

**Recognise five categories of child abuse:**

- **Physical Abuse:** physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child. Examples include hurting or injuring a child, inflicting pain, poisoning, shaking or otherwise causing physical harm to the child.
- **Sexual Abuse:** sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others. This includes direct or indirect sexual exploitation or corruption of children by involving them (or threatening to involve them) in inappropriate sexual activities.
- **Emotional abuse:** emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a care-giver and a child rather than a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met, for example repeatedly rejecting children, humiliating them, frightening them or denying their worth and rights as human beings.
- **Neglect:** neglect is defined as the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and physiological needs. This can be defined in terms of an omission, where a child's health, safety, development or welfare is being avoidably impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults or medical care.
- **Bullying:** Bullying may be defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It can take many forms, but the three main types are physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft) verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, threats, name calling) and emotional (e.g. isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of their peer group).

The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, cause them significant harm.

## 5. Recognising Abuse

Detection of abuse is seldom straightforward and rarely clear cut. It is important therefore, to share concerns with the Centre Manager, who is the designated member of staff as detailed in this policy document. Below are some of the physical and behavioural indicators of abuse. No one indicator should be seen as conclusive in itself of abuse. It may indicate conditions other than child abuse. All signs and symptoms must be examined in the context of the child's situation and family circumstances. Guidelines for recognition:

- Considering the possibility;
- Look out for signs of neglect or abuse;
- Recording of information.

**Bullying** - is not always easy to recognise as it can take a number of forms. A child may encounter bullying attacks that are:

- Physical: pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching and other forms of violence or threats
- Verbal: name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing
- Emotional: excluding, tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating.

Persistent bullying can result in:

- Depression, Low self-esteem, Shyness.
- Poor academic achievement, Isolation, Threatened or attempted suicide.

Signs that a child may be being bullied can be:

- Coming home with cuts and bruises, Torn clothes, Asking for stolen possessions to be replaced, Losing dinner money.
- Falling out with previously good friends, Being moody and bed tempered, Wanting to avoid leaving their home, Aggression with younger brothers and sisters
- Doing less well at school, Sleep problems, Anxiety, Becoming quiet and withdrawn.

**Physical Abuse** - are bruises or injuries that either unexplained or inconsistent with the explanation given or visible on the “soft” parts of the body where accidental injuries are unlikely, e.g. cheeks, abdomen, back and buttocks. A delay in seeking medical treatment when it is obviously necessary is also a cause for concern, although this can be more complicated with burns, as these are often delayed in presentation due to blistering taking place sometime later.

Physical Indicators:

Unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body Multiple bruises – in clusters, often on the upper arm, outside of the thigh Cigarette burns Human bite marks Broken bones Scalds, with upward splash marks, Multiple burns with a clearly demarcated edge.

Behavioural Indicators:

Fear of parents being approached for an explanation, Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts, Flinching when approached or touched, Reluctance to get changed, for example in hot weather, Depression, Withdrawn behaviour, Running away from home.

**Sexual Abuse** - Adults who use children to meet their own sexual needs abuse both girls and boys of all ages, including infants and toddlers. Usually, in cases of sexual abuse it is the child’s behaviour that may cause you to become concerned, although physical signs can also be present. In all cases, children who tell about sexual abuse do so because they want it to stop. It is important, therefore, that they are listened to and taken seriously.

Physical Indicators:

Pain or itching in the genital area , Bruising or bleeding near genital area, Sexually transmitted disease, Vaginal discharge or infection, Stomach pains, discomfort when walking or sitting down, Pregnancy.

Behavioural Indicators:

Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour e.g. becoming aggressive or withdrawn Fear of being left with a specific person or group of people Having nightmares Running away from home Sexual knowledge which is beyond their age, or developmental level, Sexual drawings or language Bedwetting, Eating problems such as overeating or anorexia, Self-harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide attempts, Saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about, Substance or drug abuse, Suddenly having unexplained sources of money, Not allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence), Acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults.

**Emotional abuse** - can be difficult to measure, as there are often no outward physical signs. There may be a developmental delay due to failure to thrive and grow, although this will usually only be evident if the child puts on weight in other circumstances, for example then hospitalised or away from their parents’ care. Even so, children who appear well-cared for may nevertheless be emotionally abused by being taunted, put down or belittled. They may

receive little or no love, affection or attention from their parents or carers. Emotional abuse can also take the form of children not being allowed to mix or play with other children.

Behavioural Indicators: Neurotic behaviour e.g. sucking, hair twisting, rocking, Being unable to play, Fear of making mistakes, Sudden speech disorders, Self-harm, Fear of parent being approached regarding their behaviour  
Developmental delay in terms of emotional progress.

**Neglect** - can be a difficult form of abuse to recognise, yet have some of the most lasting and damaging effects on children.

- Constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from other children , Constantly dirty or “smelly”, Loss of weight, or being constantly underweight , Inappropriate clothing for the conditions.
- Behavioural Indicators:

Complaining of being tired all the time, Not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments , Having few friends, Mentioning being left alone or unsupervised.

## Appendix B: SLC Code of Behaviour

### The Slaney Language Centre Code of Behaviour

Last updated: June 2016



As a language school we strive to provide a **friendly and supportive environment**, in which our students can gain greater **confidence in oral fluency** and increase their intercultural communication working alongside **learners of various nationalities**.

SLC goals for our language students are:

- To provide quality learning experiences in a relaxed and supportive environment
- To support, assist and encourage them to make progress in all areas of language and to achieve their personal learning goals.

**Our Code of Behaviour is based on respect for others and for our environment, so that a positive and co-operative school atmosphere can prevail. A high level of courtesy and consideration for each other is necessary.**

Behaviour that is ill-mannered, dangerous or disruptive cannot be allowed. Our code of behaviour is based on an ethos that teachers, staff, excursion leaders, host families, bus drivers and other students should be treated with respect, dignity and fairness at all times.

Our Code of Behaviour aims to ensure that the experience of all our students is a positive one. It is a key tool in enabling the school to support the learning of every individual language student and consists of practices and procedures that strike an appropriate balance between our duty to maintain an effective learning environment for all students and our responsibility to students whose behaviour presents a challenge to the teaching and learning process.

At the Slaney Language Centre we promote equality of opportunity and **prohibit discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment on these grounds:**

- race
- religion
- gender
- marital status
- family status
- sexual orientation
- age
- disability

The SLC code of behaviour applies to SLC students and relates to all school activities both during and outside of normal school hours.

- 1) In the Slaney Language Centre classrooms and common areas (including courtyard and surrounding gardens)
- 2) On the school bus
- 3) In the host families' houses
- 4) During activities and excursions

**Slaney Language Centre students must obey Irish law at all times.**

We encourage our students to display the following behaviour:

In the classroom:

- To participate actively in class
- To speak English at all times
- To listen to teachers and fellow students
- To follow instructions

In the host families' homes:

- To spend time with host family members in the kitchen or the living room.
- If there are children in the families, to play with them.
- To watch TV and listen to the radio
- To read books in English. To ask host families, if they can recommend a good book.
- To discuss similarities and differences between family life in Ireland and in students' home countries. Staying with a host family gives students a great opportunity to find out interesting facts about Irish customs and traditions.
- To adapt to the routine of the host family and always be respectful towards family members.
- **To respect host family's property and house rules.**

On the bus:

- To make new friends on Jim's bus and sit beside a different person every day.
- To always chat in English.
- **To follow all safety instructions!**

**Always be polite and show respect towards other people.**

**The following behaviour will not be tolerated.**

- Distracting other students in class.
- Not being prepared and ready for class, with class materials and homework.
- Not participating in class.
- Eating in the classroom or on the bus
- Speaking a language other than English in the classroom or common rooms.
- Not listening to staff members
- Not listening to teachers or fellow students in class.
- Using mobile phones in class.
- Using bad/rude language in class.
- Leaving rubbish in Slaney Language Centre rooms, gardens or the school bus.

Disciplinary sanctions will apply as follow:

- **1) Verbal warning**
- **2) Red sticker beside the student's name on the classroom attendance list**
- **3) The student will have to sign the incident report book with the Academic Director or the Managing Director.**

**Parents of underage students will be informed of the misbehaviour.**

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- Damaging School Property, Bus Property, Property of Activity Providers or Property belongings of the host families.
- Disrespectful behaviour towards another person including host family members
- Smoking in the host family's house
- Not obeying safety instructions
- Not obeying host family rules

Disciplinary sanctions will apply as follows:

- 1) The student will have to sign the incident report book.**  
**Students who do not follow safety instructions on the bus will be excluded from future excursions.**
- 2) Parents of underage students will be notified by the school director.**  
**Apologies will be required. Damaged property will have to be paid for by the student's parents.**
- 2) Adult students will have to leave the classroom and to apologise to the relevant person. All damaged property will have to be paid for.**
- 3) If inappropriate behaviour continues, the student may be expelled and no refunds of fees will be made.**

**All Irish laws must be obeyed at all times.**

- Underage drinking (Under Irish law alcohol can only be consumed when aged 18+)
- Underage smoking (Under Irish law smoking is only permitted when aged 18+)
- Underage sex
- Drugs (other than prescribed medication)
- Having overnight guests in a host family house (unless permitted by the host family)

Disciplinary sanctions will apply as follows

- 1) The Guards (police) will be called and underage students' parents will be informed.**
- 2) The student will be expelled from school and sent home at his/her own expense. No refunds of fees will be given.**

The management.

## **Appendix C: SLC Anti-Bullying Policy**

### **Mission Statement**

In order to promote a safe, productive and inclusive learning environment, the school has adopted a zero tolerance approach to bullying in all our centres. .

### **Definition.**

While occasional disagreements or altercations between students may be inevitable, bullying is regarded as a targeted pattern of such behaviour by one or more students, as distinct from an individual incident

*Bullying may be involve one or more of the following elements;*

Physical-involving kicking/hitting/slapping/boxing or other types of aggression or intimidation, invasion of personal space

Verbal-involving name-calling, shouting, aggressive or intimidator language

Social-involving exclusion, rumour mongering, malicious gossiping (including online, via text, using phones or social networking sites.)

Property-based-involving damage, theft or extortion

Discriminatory-targeting a student due to race, colour, gender, sexuality, religion, dress, political beliefs, age, family or disability

Sexual-unwelcome touching, inappropriate comments, harassment

### **When will the Policy apply**

During breaks

Travelling To / from school

On school trips / tours

During any extracurricular activities

In the classroom

At all times during a student's stay.

## **Reporting Bullying.**

- a) Students can make the school aware of problems involving themselves or other students they know by
  - telling their host family who will inform management
  - telling their teacher/DOS directly.
  - calling management directly (each student has a direct number for Pastoral Care)
  - including a note in their homework
  - informing their parents (who should contact management immediately).

It is important that students be made aware of these avenues

- b) Teachers, Host families, Management and other staff should remain vigilant for both direct incidents and possible indirect symptoms of bullying. These may include:

- Anxiety about travelling to and from school
- Unwillingness to go to school
- Pattern of unexplained absenteeism or lateness
- Pattern of illness
- Unexplained changes in mood or behaviour
- Out of character comments about pupils or teachers
- Possessions missing or damaged
- Increased requests for money or stealing
- Unexplained bruising or damaged clothing

## **Dealing with Incidences of Bullying.**

Minor non-malicious incidences should be challenged by staff and verbal agreements sought from students involved to desist from such actions. When a targeted pattern of unacceptable behaviour becomes apparent.

- a) The DOS and Manager should be informed immediately.
- b) For serious incidents (including those involving injury), the reporting party (teacher/host family etc.) should fill out an incident report form (Appendix 1).
- c) The parties involved are interviewed separately by DOS/Manager and allowed to present their interpretation of events. In the case of group bullying, the group members should be interviewed separately. In light of these interviews (which may involve written reports from the parties involved), the incident report and taking into consideration the viewpoint of the reporting party, the DOS/Manager determines whether further action is warranted.

**Possible Consequences for Instigators of Bullying (from least to most serious)**

- a) Those engaged are verbally challenged, informed of the unacceptability of their behaviour and verbally agree to desist.
- b) Those engaged are reported to management who inform them of possible consequences (including ultimate expulsion) of a failure to amend unacceptable behaviour. Dependent on the situation, students may need to apologise to victims and/ or be given a punishment assignment.
- c) Instigators of repeated transgressions have their parents informed and are given a written warning that their behaviour may result in exclusion from class.
- d) For incidences which may involve dangerous disregard for others physical safety, repeated disregard for warnings and instructions from staff or a consistent inability to work within the anti-bullying ethos of the school, a student maybe suspended or ultimately expelled and returned home at their own expense. In extreme cases (e.g. exceptional physical violence or intimidation), the Gardaí may be informed.

Management, staff and host families should liaise to ensure that every support is available to victims of bullying to comfort them, reassure them and help to rebuild their confidence.

#### Awareness (to do)

*For Teachers- A copy of Bullying Policy is included in the Induction Handout.*

*For Students- The Anti-Bullying Code is displayed in the school and explained to each class during induction*

*For Host Families- A Copy of the Policy is supplied to all host families*

*For Management-The Policy is reviewed every 2 years.*

## **Appendix D SLC Pupil Attendance Strategy**

Attendance for classes is compulsory.

Teachers should inform management of any absences. In the case of junior students (i.e. <18 years old), Management should be informed if they are absent within fifteen minutes of the lesson start time.

Management then tries to ascertain a reason for the absence. If the reason is deemed unacceptable, the student is made aware of this. If the behaviour is repeated, the student's carers/host family/leaders are involved and if necessary the parents are informed.

Adult student are made aware of the impact of absences on their learning progress but ultimately it is their own responsibility to attend lessons for which they have paid.

In certain instances where attendance levels are required for visa/scholarship qualification, the Management ensures that the student is made aware of the possible consequences of missing lessons and the relevant awarding parties are kept informed as required (e.g. the Garda Immigration Bureau).

## **Appendix E SLC Supervision of Pupils, Afternoon Activities and Excursions**

Cool Kids Courses (for 6 to 10 year old students), Keen Teens Courses (for 11 to 15 year old students) and General English Group Courses (for students aged 16 or above) are held in groups of no less than two students in open classrooms visible from outside and accessible at all times.

In situations where a (junior or adult) student requires one to one tutoring, the door of the classroom remains open. (Except at peak times where noise from other students may interrupt the lesson).

For all school outings there is a designated leader in charge of headcounts, safety, organisation,

When travelling with individual students by car, the designated leader should allow the student to sit in the back of the car.

## **Appendix F SLC Pastoral Student Care**

The pastoral care of students at the SLC is primarily the responsibility of the manager who liaises with the DOS, teachers, host families and other staff to ensure the personal requirements of each individual student are met to the best of our ability.

There is a 24/7 service available to deal with any student problems which may arise.

### **Specific Student Requirements**

An initial pastoral needs assessment of students is conducted through the registration form which comprehensively questions prospective students as to their requirements e.g. specific, medical, religious preferences. Every attempt is made to match student requirements with suitable accommodation/ host families/ activity timetables and social schedules. (E.g. religious students are placed with likeminded hosts etc.).

### **Host Families**

All host families are visited and personally vetted by the Manager and where possible students are housed in host families whose children are of similar age. The majority of host families have a long history providing accommodation to SLC students.

### **Travel Arrangements**

All necessary arrangements are made to ensure young students are accompanied at all times on their journeys to and from Wexford.

All students are brought directly to their accommodation upon arrival either by accompanied public transport or by their host families.

Students are given an induction on their first morning including comprehensive details of class timetables, transport information, activities schedules, location maps and contact numbers for the school.

### **Cultural Concerns**

As far as is possible, when organising accommodation, timetabling classes, and choosing class content, the cultural values of each student are taken into consideration. E.g. suitable discussion topics, vegetarian/halal dietary options, the class placement of students with fundamentally opposing philosophies. Integration into Irish social, family, sporting and cultural life is actively encouraged.

### **Student Conflict**

Minor conflicts in class are dealt with by the teacher while more serious situations are referred to the Manager.

### **Complaints.**

Complaints are dealt with by the Manager or DOS who try to accommodate all reasonable requests.



