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RETNS POLICY ON HEALTH AND SAFETY

Introduction:

The Board of Management, BOM, is committed to ensuring high standards of health and safety in and around the school premises. This policy outlines the measures that will be taken to create a safe working and learning environment for children, staff, parents/guardians and visitors to the school.

Purpose:

The BOM is responsible for ensuring a healthy and safe working and learning environment for children, staff, parents/guardians and visitors to the school. The BOM is required to adhere to the provisions of all applicable health, safety and welfare legislation and codes of practice, including the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, to ensure the school environment is maintained to required standards. The Board of Management is committed to providing a positive work environment and to manage work activities in such a way as to prevent behaviour likely to put health and safety at risk.

Scope:

This policy applies to children, staff, parents/guardians and visitors to the school complex.

Policy statement:

The BOM is responsible for ensuring school facilities and the school environment are maintained in an appropriate manner to ensure the health, safety and welfare of school staff, children, visitors and members of the school community to the most extent possible.

The BOM is the employer of the school's staff and it has overall responsibility for ensuring health 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 and-or grounds during the school day or, outside school hours.

The BOM will ensure regular health and safety checks are carried out to minimise risk to staff, children, parents/guardians and visitors. It will ensure regular reviews are carried out and necessary interventions are made to ensure facilities are maintained to the best extent possible in the context of available resources.

1 Health:

1.1 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.

Appropriate attention will be given to the design and use of work stations and audio-visual displays, including computer screens and interactive whiteboards. Smoking will not be allowed anywhere in the school and its grounds.

1.2 Illness:

Parents/guardians will be required when enrolling in school to complete a form listing any long-term allergies and illnesses that their children suffer from so that tailored interventions can be put in place if necessary to manage situations, such as where children suffer serious allergies (for example, banning nut products). The form 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. *See also the Policy on the Administration of Medication.* Parents/guardians will be similarly required to complete this form if their child develops any long-term allergies/illnesses whilst enrolled in the school.

1.3 Communicable disease:

In the case of any infectious disease, the school shall use the most up-to-date information from the Health Service Executive to guide its response. This may require informing parents- guardians and/or the temporary exclusion of individuals to limit any associated risks.

1.4 Health promotion:

The school will promote safe and healthy living, both through the curriculum and in other ways. For example, participation in the school's Walking Bus initiative, healthy eating, and walking/cycling to school will be encouraged.

2 Safety:

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 signposted 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 once per school term. 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/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 where necessary. Parents/guardians are reminded of the need to ensure their contact details are up to date.

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.

2.5 Investigation, recording and reporting:

It is important that instances, if any, of accidents or 'near misses' that result from compromised health and safety circumstances are recorded and investigated to ensure relevant lessons are learned for the future. To this end, the school maintains a logbook of all such instances. The Principal will report on such instances at the next meeting of the BOM (or 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/guardians will be informed at the earliest opportunity of any such closure using a range of communication techniques. If school is open when an incident occurs, staff will remain on the premises until all children have been collected. *See also the Policy on the Management of Critical Incidents.*

2.7 Traffic management:

The school recognises that great numbers of staff, children, 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. Parents/guardians are reminded not to park on pathways or double yellow lines. Vehicles should be parked only in the designated area outside the school and parents/guardians are also reminded not to obstruct entrances or driveways in the vicinity.

2.8 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. Trolley-style bags are banned, other than in exceptional circumstances.

2.9 Children arriving at school:

The doors to the school open at 8.50 a.m. and parents/guardians who wish to drop off children early should exercise caution as the school grounds are not supervised before this time. Unless otherwise indicated, the side gate is unlocked and children from 4th - 6th enter the school through the side door from where they make their way directly to their classrooms. First and Second classes will enter via the fire escape. Infants and Third class will enter through the doors directly from the yard and Junior and Senior Infant children must be dropped to the door by their parents/guardians. Ordinarily, the side door will be locked and the side gate closed at 9.10 a.m. People arriving after this time must use the front door to access the school.

2.10 Children exiting the school:

Junior and Senior Infant children must be collected at the school's front door. Children using the Half One Club will be brought to the Club from their classrooms by Half One Club staff and parents/guardians must collect them at 2.25 p.m. at the front door. First to Sixth class children leave their classrooms at 2.30 p.m. and leave the school as they entered in the morning or make their way to the Half Two Club. Children 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 children need to leave school early (for example, for a dental appointment), their parents/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). Any child who leaves early must be signed out at the office prior to leaving the premises. Communications pertaining to leaving school early should be made through Aladdin Connect.

2.11 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 and no substitute teacher is employed, the principal or a support teacher will divide the children between the other classes for the duration of the school day.

On occasion, a teacher may have to leave the classroom for a short period of time. If so, they 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, a teacher will ordinarily supervise each of the school yards, assisted by the school's Additional Needs Assistants (ANAs). 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/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.

2.12 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/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 passengers will be used and all passengers will be required to make use of these. Children are paired up for each excursion and must follow their teacher's instructions at all times.

In the case of swimming classes, accompanying staff will inspect the changing rooms on arrival. Children are required to get ready for the pool quickly. They should not run or enter the pool until the instructor gives permission to do so. At the end of the lesson, children are required to get dressed and ready to return to school without delay. No shampoos, soaps, deodorants, body sprays or similar may be used. Accompanying staff will ensure the children are all accounted for before departure.

2.13 Out-of-hours activities:

The school coordinates certain activities outside of the ordinary school day, either on an *ad hoc* basis (for example, weekend events or sports matches) or a more permanent basis (for example, the Half One Club for children in the infant classes and the Half Two Club for older children). The BOM

reserves the right to request the attendance of a parent/guardian to supervise their child(ren) at out-of-hours activities in order to ensure their safety.

2.14 Equipment:

The school will provide safe equipment for both its staff and children. 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. 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.

2.15 Animals:

No animals may be brought onto the school grounds at any time, or to any school events outside the school grounds, with the exception of assistance dogs or as part of a specific teaching/learning project, such as a visit from the DSPCA.

3 Roles/responsibilities:

3.1 BOM:

The BOM will ensure that an up-to-date Safety Statement is in place and displayed prominently in the school.

The BOM will ensure a risk assessment is carried out at least once a year and 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 that there is adequate insurance in place to cover the activities of the school. The BOM will appoint at least one competent person to ensure health and safety compliance. This person may be an external expert or a member of the BOM but not the Principal or Teacher Representative on the BOM. The BOM will sanction relevant health and safety training for this person if necessary. The BOM will sanction relevant first aid training for staff members who volunteer to act as first responders.

3.2 Principal and Deputy Principal:

The Principal is the link between the BOM and staff. The Principal will ensure that all staff, including temporary and part-time staff, receive induction and ongoing training and regular updates of information on health and safety matters. The Principal will consult with staff on behalf of the BOM at least once a year 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. The Principal will also receive and deal initially with any health and safety concerns received from staff, parents/guardians and others.

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

3.3 Staff:

All staff, including temporary and part-time staff, are required to cooperate with the BOM and others to ensure health and safety procedures and legislation are implemented. Staff members 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. In terms of child welfare, teachers act *in loco parentis* and are expected to do what a reasonably careful parent/guardian would do in any situation involving risk.

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

Staff members must use available facilities and equipment and other forms of protective materials to ensure work practices are performed in the safest manner possible and must not intentionally or recklessly interfere with or misuse any such facilities, equipment or protection. Staff may not be under the influence of any 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 the staff safety representative without delay.

Employees are entitled and encouraged to elect annually a safety representative who will have the right to represent employees on health and safety matters. If the staff wish to establish one, the Principal will facilitate the establishment of a staff safety committee.

3.4 Parents/guardians

Parents/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 the 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/guardians are responsible for their children before and after the school day and are reminded that their children should not engage in dangerous play in and around the school. During the school day, once a child enters the school building, the teachers are *in loco parentis* and thus primarily responsible for the child's health, safety and welfare. Parents/guardians, however, have responsibility for any other children who accompany them onto the school grounds.

Parents/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/guardians are requested to report any health and safety concerns to the Principal and/or the Chairperson of the BOM.

3.5 Children

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

3.6 Visitors

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.

Related documentation:

Policy on the Administration of Medication

Policy on the Management of Critical Incidents

Policy on Data Protection

Child safeguarding policies and procedures

Dignity and Respect at Work Policy

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005

Review date:

This policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis. Health and safety risk assessments will take place 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 2024.

Contact details:

Queries about this policy should be addressed to the Principal in the first instance:

The Principal

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