

The Parish of Our Lady and St. John Child Protection Policy Statement

Introduction:

The family is the first and most basic community in our society. The Christian family is the first community to announce the Gospel to the human person in all stages of growth. This policy is presented in the context of the family's primacy in our society and in our Church and the central role of children in it. Gospel values are the driving force of our concern for children. In the Gospel we are reminded how Jesus showed constant care for the vulnerable. He began his ministry with these words of the prophet Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me;
For he has anointed me.
He has sent me to bring good news to the poor,
To proclaim liberty to captives
And to the blind new sight,
To set the downtrodden free,
To proclaim the Lord's year of favour. (Luke 4: 18-19).

In Matthew 25, the Lord, in his discourse to his apostles and disciples, told them that whenever they show mercy and compassion to the least ones, they show it to him. Jesus extended this care in a tender and urgent way to children, rebuking his disciples for keeping them away from him: 'Let the children come to me; do not stop them.' (Matthew 19:14). And he uttered a grave warning that for anyone who would lead the little ones astray, it would be better for such a person 'to have a great millstone hung round his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea' (Matthew 18:6).

The Parish of Our Lady and St. John recognises and upholds the dignity and rights of all children and is committed to ensuring their safety and wellbeing.

The Parish of Our Lady and St. John values and encourages the participation of children and young people in all parish liturgies and in all activities that enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development.

Above all the Parish of Our Lady and St. John recognises the need to protect children and young people and aims to do this in a way that promotes their human dignity, integrity and worth as children of God.

The Parish of Our Lady and St. John recognises that while child protection is everyone's responsibility, all involved in working with young people have a special duty of care towards them.

The Parish of Our Lady and St. John has committed itself to engaging in a process towards putting procedures in place through which this care is put into effect.

2. General Principles Guiding Best Practice for the Ministry of Children and Young People

The Parish of Our Lady and St. John:

- Values and encourages the active participation of children and young people in the life of the church in ways that enhance their physical, emotional and spiritual growth within the safe, secure and welcoming environment of their Faith Community. Each person should feel valued, encouraged and affirmed;
- Recognises and upholds the fundamental right of the individual child and young person to be respected, nurtured, cared for and protected. These rights are embedded both in our Gospel values and civil legislation;
- Acknowledges and reaffirms its commitment to the care and protection of children and young people as ‘children of God’, with intrinsic dignity and irreducible worth;
- Believes that Child Protection is everyone’s responsibility, but accepts that all working with children and young people in Church Ministries have a special duty of care towards them;
- Is committed to ‘best practice’ in the area of Child Protection, including:
 - The development of effective structures for safeguarding children and young people
 - Responding to allegations of child abuse, which includes cooperating with the relevant civil authorities.
 - Providing pastoral support and training for all church personnel.
- Is engaging in a process of working towards a set of policies and procedures for those who have responsibility for the protection of children and young people in the life of the church;
- Is willing to listen to children and young people, and involve them where appropriate in decision making;
- Promotes an ethos and approach, which at all times gives paramount consideration to the welfare of the child and young person.
- Undertakes to inform parents/guardians/primary carers of our Child Protection policy.

3. The Parish of Our Lady and St. John Code of Good Practice – Basic Procedures List

In order to support the Parish Policy it is necessary that the following procedures be implemented:

A clearly defined process for the recruitment and supervision of adults working with children and young people, which will include:

- Volunteer/ employment application forms, to include Garda Clearance (when available)
- Declaration forms for all adult leaders.
- Induction and training records

- Attendance records
- Applicants will provide proof of identification i.e., photo ID.

A duty roster of adults to ensure adequate supervision of children and young people at all time will be available.

Appropriate supervision ratios of adults to children and young people, while maintaining the practice that no child or young person is left alone with an adult.

In our duty of care and protection for children and young people, best practice will include the following procedures and record keeping:

- Record of activities and participants.
- A clearly communicated Accident and Emergency plan; (this will be worked on shortly).
- Medical information and treatment permission as appropriate for all children and young people.
- Signed parental/guardian consent for each child and young person.
- Participant forms.
- Incident/accident report forms.
- Attendance records.
- Contact information for parents/guardians.
- Named group leader/designated person who can be contacted in relation to any query about good practice procedures.
- A code of conduct for all adults, children and young people
- For away trips and pilgrimages the above procedures must be followed, and in addition pre-check on accommodation and transport arrangements must be made.
- There will be a procedure in place to review policy on an annual basis.

4. The Parish of Our Lady and St. John Code of Conduct – Basics for working with children and young people

In order to support the Parish Policy and Procedures it is necessary that the following code of conduct be applied as a minimum standard for all those who work with children and young people

- Leaders will treat children and young people with courtesy, dignity and respect.
- Leaders will always engage with children and young people in an open manner, taking care not to show favoritism.
- There will be an adequate ratio of leaders to children and young people at all times.
- A leader will not work alone with children or young people
- Care will be taken to ensure that leaders of mixed gender will work in pairs with mixed gender groups
- There will be a clearly designated leader within each group with whom children and young people and other leaders can raise concerns.
- Leaders will not consume alcohol while having responsibility for, or in the presence of, children and young people

- Leaders will not smoke in the presence of children and young people
- The use of drugs or illegal substances by leaders is strictly prohibited.
- Leaders will not use inappropriate language or make sexually suggestive comments, either to each other or to children and young people
- Physical contact between leaders and children and young people will be of an appropriate nature at all times. Leaders will not engage in rough play with each other or with children and young people
- Leaders will not undertake any task of a personal nature with/for children and young people except in cases of medical necessity when the welfare of the children and young people depends on it.
- Only the named leader/designated person will hold personal details of children and young people.
- Leaders will not give their personal details to children and young people unless absolutely necessary
- Children and young people will be contacted via their parents/guardians/carers except in emergencies
- The Parish of Our Lady and St. John will have a designated person (Fr. Liam O'Driscoll) to whose immediate attention all concerns and/or complaints can be brought.
- The parish designated person will respond promptly to all child protection concerns and liaise with the required civil and church authorities in accordance with established guidelines
- All concerns/complaints will be followed through in a timely and efficient manner in accordance with the guidelines.
- The Parish of Our Lady and St. John will have a specific code of conduct for all away trips including pilgrimages, day trips and incentive events.
- The parish code of conduct, including an anti-bullying policy specific to children and young people, will apply.
- The right to privacy of children and young people will be respected at all times.
- Where a Church activity involves the use of computers, an email and internet policy will be put in place.
- Written permission will be sought from parents/guardians, and kept on file, for the taking and use of photographs.
- There will be clearly designated leaders within each group with whom the children and young people can speak about their experiences and raise any concerns.

The Parish of Our Lady and St. John:

Protection Policy

In the event of a concern about the welfare of a child or young person we will:

- Respond to the needs of the child
- Inform the primary carers unless this action puts the child at further risk
- If there are child protection concerns the diocese is obliged to pass these onto the designated person and / or duty social worker
- In the event of a complaint against a member of staff we will immediately ensure the safety of the child and inform the parents/guardians/primary carers as appropriate