

Policy on Vetting, Volunteers and Visitors

As part of our commitment to safeguarding the children in our school, it is the policy of our school that we take all reasonable steps to ensure that adults who come into contact with pupils in school, either in a paid or voluntary capacity, are safe and suitable persons to work with children.

This policy will outline the use of Access NI for the vetting of staff (teaching & non-teaching), sports coaches, work experience students and all other adults who work or come into contact with our pupils. It will also lay out the procedures which should be followed in dealing with visitors to our school.

Guidance

In devising this policy, we have used guidance from the following DE circulars:

Disclosure and barring arrangements: changes to pre-employment vetting checks for volunteers working in schools **(Circular 2012/19)**

Recruitment of people to work with children and young people in educational settings **(Circular 2006/06)**

Teaching Staff (full-time / permanent)

Pre-employment vetting checks via Access NI will be carried out as part of the recruitment process for all newly appointed teachers. Two references will also be sought (employment & character references) for all successful candidates. Confirmation of appointment will not be guaranteed, until the above procedures have been finalised to the satisfaction of the recruitment sub-committee of the BOG. All newly appointed teaching staff will receive full internal child protection training, copies of the safeguarding policies, a copy of the staff code of conduct and the staff induction hand-book on appointment.

Substitute Teachers

Substitute teachers will only be employed using the NISTR portal. All teachers who register their availability with NISTR will have been vetted for employment and will be registered with the GTCNI. Where possible, we try to use substitute teachers who are known to us and who are familiar with our school context. All substitute teachers, on their first day of employment, will receive a copy of the school safeguarding policies and the staff code of conduct as part of their induction.

Trainee Teachers

Each year, we take great pleasure in hosting students from Coláiste Ollscoile Naomh Mhuire (SMUCB) for their school experience / teaching practice placements. SMUCB confirms that all trainee teachers have been vetted in their first year at the college and are covered by the college's insurance whilst on placement in a school. All trainee teachers, on their first day of placement, will receive a copy of the school safeguarding policies and the staff code of conduct as part of their induction.

Non-teaching staff

Non-teaching staff (including class-room assistants, secretary, cleaners, lunch supervisors, catering staff) play an important role in the pastoral development of the school. All non-teaching staff will be vetted prior to appointment. All newly appointed non-teaching staff will receive full internal child protection training, copies of the safeguarding policies, a copy of the staff code of conduct and the staff induction hand-book on appointment.

Urgent Vacancies / Appointments

In the case of an urgent vacancy arising in a non-teaching post, a person who is known to the school may need to be appointed to fill a temporary position and commence work in the school before a vetting check can be carried out. Principals must carry out a risk assessment in such circumstances and all necessary steps should be taken to ensure the safeguarding of children. This may include day to day supervision of the person until the Access NI check has been returned. The temporary staff member will be briefed on school safeguarding procedures and given a copy of the child protection policies and staff code of conduct, as part of their induction.

Enhanced Disclosure Certificates (EDCs)

Enhanced Disclosure Certificates (EDCs) issued by AccessNI are held by the EA for all teaching and non-teaching members of staff in Naíscoil & Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir.

EA Catering Services hold the EDCs for any catering staff deployed to our school.

Work Experience Students

Each year, we take great pleasure in hosting students on work experience. These students take part in what DE circular 2012/19 describes as 'supervised regulated activity'. The students are supervised by a member of teaching staff at all times and are never left alone or in charge of pupils. Therefore, there is no compulsion for the school to carry out an Access NI check on these students.

GAA Coaches

The GAA 'coaching in schools' programme provides invaluable support to schools in the promotion of physical exercise and in the promotion of Gaelic games. All coaches have been vetted by the Ulster Council of the GAA and have presented copies of their Access NI certificates to the school on their preliminary visit prior to the commencement of the coaching sessions.

Vetting of Volunteers

A volunteer can be described as an adult who carries out work / duties in our school without payment. Examples of this may be:

- A parent who accompanies us on a school outing
- A parent / other adult who assists with specific curricular projects / initiatives

DE Circular 2012/19 clarifies a distinct difference in what is known as 'regulated activity'. In short, regulated activity now describes activity that happens on a regular basis, without supervision.

This definition assists our school in carrying out a **risk assessment** on whether or not a volunteer needs to have an Access NI check carried out, before they can commence voluntary work in the school.

Volunteers who are **not supervised** are regarded as working in 'Regulated Activity' and therefore an EDC from Access NI is still required.

The EA accepts the charges for Access NI checks on all volunteers working in 'Regulated Activity' in an unsupervised manner in schools.

If a volunteer is **supervised** then under the new DBA they are not regarded as working in 'Regulated Activity' and therefore a school is **not required** to obtain an EDC from Access NI.

Supervision of Volunteers

Volunteers can be described as being 'reasonably supervised' while undertaking their duties, if that supervision is carried out by a member of school staff and is carried out on a regular and day to day basis. This assumes that the volunteer will be supervised in their duties throughout the duration of their time on the school and not (which sometimes happens) at the beginning of their term in the school, with supervision tapering off or becoming non-existent as time goes on.

Workshop Providers

Circular 2010/09 also provides guidance on the use of outside providers of educational workshops or extra-curricular activities.

In our school we use the services of a wide range of external providers, in particular those within the Irish language community, to enrich the educational experience and Irish language acquisition of our pupils. These include:

- Armagh Rhymers
- Derry City and Strabane Council – Cultural events

The definition of '**Regulated Activity**' describes unsupervised activity performed regularly. Regularly means carried out by the same person frequently (once a week or more often), or on four or more days in a 30 day period.

This definition again assists us in carrying out a **risk assessment** regarding workshop providers, who:

- do not need to be vetted if the workshop is a one off activity
- will need to be vetted if the workshop is a regular / weekly activity on more than 4 days of the same month.

Visitors

Visitors to the school can be categorised in two groups:

Category 1

- visitors who we know / were expecting / have been contracted by the school / EA to carry out work / maintenance

These types of visitors will be asked to sign in the 'visitors' book and will be given a 'visitors pass' to identify them to children as visitors to the school who the principal and staff are aware of.

Category 2

- visitors who we do not know / were not expecting and who do not have official identification

Staff (teaching and non-teaching) have been advised to deal with any unknown visitors to the school with caution. A safety and security briefing advised staff to:

- greet the visitor in a courteous manner
- enquire what the business of their visit is
- ask them to remain at the door so that the staff member can get someone to deal with them
- close the front door to secure the building
- inform the principal, secretary or other staff member that an unknown visitor is at the door
- return to deal with the visitor with the principal, secretary or other staff member
- two staff members to remain at the door when dealing with unknown visitors until it has been ascertained that they pose no risk
- Normal visitor procedures can then be implemented
- If an unknown visitor becomes agitated / aggressive, the PSNI will be contacted immediately.

Review and Monitoring of this Policy

This policy will be reviewed in light of any updated guidance from the EA or Dept. Of Education. The effectiveness of the policy will be monitored in light of any specific related incidents and amendments made as deemed appropriate by the school safeguarding team and ratified by the BOG.