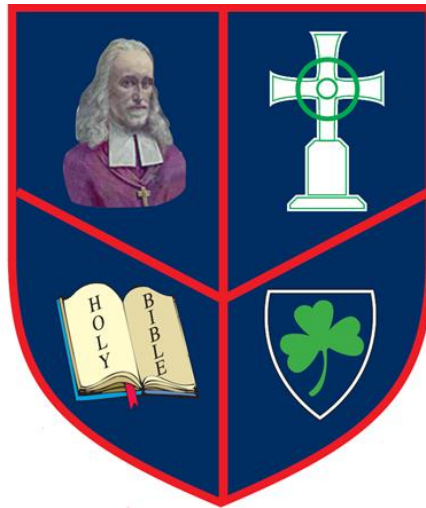


# Use of Volunteers & Vetting Policy



**St Oliver Plunkett Primary School  
and Nursery Unit**

**June 2022**

## **Use of Volunteers & Vetting Policy**

It is the policy of our school that all adults who come into contact with pupils either in a paid or voluntary capacity are safe and suitable persons to work with children. To this end we use Access NI to carry out background checks for all adults who work regularly in our school.

### **Paid Staff**

Pre-Employment vetting checks remain a key preventative measure in denying an unsuitable individual access to children and vulnerable adults through the education system.

### **Pre-Employment Vetting**

All new paid teaching and non-teaching staff, being appointed to posts in schools, must undergo a pre-employment vetting check before taking up their post. The process for doing so, through AccessNI remains unchanged.

Under the new Disclosure and Barring Arrangements, teachers and non-teaching staff are regarded as undertaking unsupervised Regulated Activities in a specified place such as a school. Consequently, the type of staff listed below, continue to require a vetting check to be carried out before they are employed in a school.

Pre-employment vetting checks should therefore continue to be carried out as part of the recruitment process for those staff being offered a post in a school and applications to AccessNI should continue to be made through our relevant AccessNI Registered Body as before. Enhanced Disclosure Certificates (EDCs) issued by AccessNI are valid for each recruitment process that an individual undertakes.

### **Previous Employment in the Education Sector**

Due to the unique features of the education sector, where staff move between schools, the academic year and its vacation periods (in particular the extended summer break), a school may be in a position where it recruits a paid member of staff who had previously worked at another school until the end of the preceding term. In such circumstances schools should obtain advice from their Employing Authority as to the vetting requirements for these individuals.

Depending on an individual's circumstances and employment history a new vetting check may not be required for paid teaching and non-teaching staff, if their previous employment history within the education sector can be verified, their break in employment in the education sector is no longer than three months and it can be confirmed that a vetting check was in place before they finished working at their previous school.

The safeguarding of pupils is paramount and if we are in any doubt about whether to vet a new member of paid staff, we should always err on the side of caution and obtain a new EDC.

### **Substitute Teachers**

Teachers employed from the Northern Ireland Substitute Teachers Register (NISTR) are normally vetted every 2 years as part of their registration with NISTR. By engaging the services of substitute teachers from the NISTR should therefore expect that they have been appropriately vetted by virtue of being on the Register.

## **Teachers**

The school only employs permanent and temporary staff who are registered with the General Teaching Council or who are on the Northern Ireland Substitute Register in accordance with Circular Number 2006/07.

## **Emergency Cover for Non-Teaching Staff**

In addition, situations will arise unexpectedly, where non-teaching staff are required to cover for permanent staff in the case of an emergency. It may be necessary that, in these circumstances, temporary arrangements have to be quickly put in place for such staff before a vetting check can be carried out. In situations where it is not possible to obtain a vetting check in advance, Principals must carry out a risk assessment and in such circumstances all necessary steps should be taken to ensure the safeguarding of children and young people.

## **Temporary Staff**

The school only uses temporary staff known to the school and who have been vetted and approved for working with children if they are working unsupervised.

## **Coaches and Tutors - see also Use of Volunteers & Sports Coaches.**

Sporting organisations such as the Irish Football Association, Gaelic Athletic Association and Irish Rugby Football Union often provide coaches to work in school. We should use appropriately vetted sports coaches in line with E.A. guidelines and procedures.

Our music tutors and the coaches who regularly work in school unsupervised are all vetted. The office retains a record of all such staff including copies of their clearance documents.

## **Visitors to the School**

All visitors to the school will be expected to sign in on arrival and sign out when leaving. They will be expected to wear an official visitor badge and will be supervised at all times when around children.

Visitors to schools to attend meetings or events such as parents or to deliver goods or carry out maintenance tasks do not routinely need to be vetted before being allowed onto school premises. However, such visitors should be managed by school staff and their access to areas and movement within the school should be restricted as needs require. They should be (as required):

- Met/directed by school staff/representatives;
- Signed in and out of the school by school staff;
- If appropriate, be given restricted access to only specific areas of the school;
- Where possible, they should be escorted around the school by a member of staff;
- If left unattended, they should be clearly identified with visitor/contractor passes; their access to pupils restricted to the purpose of their visit;
- If delivering goods or carrying out building, maintenance or repair tasks, their work area should be cordoned off from pupils for health and safety reasons.

## **Services provided by the Education Authority:**

- Education Welfare Officers who work in schools are vetted by the E.A.;
- Peripatetic Teachers who work in schools are vetted by E.A.;
- Education Psychologists who work in schools are vetted by E.A.;
- Music Tutors who work in schools are vetted by E.A.

## **Transport to schools - Private arrangements made by Schools.**

Only taxi/bus/private coach firms and their named and vetted drivers, contracted to the relevant Employing Authority to provide home to school transport services, should be used to transport pupils.

## **Transport services provided by the Education Authority**

The Education Authority vets drivers and assistants providing transport for pupils to schools.

## **Exceptions**

In some cases there will be no requirement for adults who work or volunteer in our school to be vetted. This applies to people who do not carry out regular activity in school (more than 3 times per month) and are not unsupervised. This category most commonly refers to:

1. Parent volunteers who may be giving a one off talk or assisting with a school trip.
2. Visitors to school who are leading workshops or providing entertainment e.g. writers, artists, dog warden etc.

The conduct and management of all such persons when volunteering or working in school are subject to the guidelines framed in our Volunteers Policy.

## **Safeguarding and Child Protection Training**

All staff receive Safeguarding and Child Protection training each year.

All temporary staff are inducted by the Principal or Vice-Principal and are briefed on the key aspects of our pastoral framework - Child Protection, Staff Code of Conduct, Health and Safety and Anti-Bullying, Positive Behaviour etc.

School governors receive training through the Education Authority Training Programmes which all governors avail of when delivered.

## **Retention and recording of Vetting Checks**

Access NI's Code of Practice advises employers not to retain EDCs or record any disclosure information contained within them for longer than is required for the purpose they were sought. In general, this should be no later than 6 months after the date on which recruitment or other relevant decisions have been taken or after the date on which any dispute has been resolved. This period should only be exceeded in very exceptional circumstances which justify retention for a longer period.

The Department of Education recommends that for each member of staff, schools should keep a note of:

- The date an EDC application is sent to the Education Authority for processing;
- The date the EDC is received from AccessNI;
- the EDC reference number,

In the event of the school being asked for evidence that a member of staff has been appropriately vetted, the school will use the record of the date and EDC reference number to confirm when a vetting check was obtained.

### **Other Safeguarding Measures**

Schools are reminded that while pre-employment vetting is of critical importance, it is only one of a number of measures that the school can use to help safeguard pupils in our care. Advice, guidance and training about appropriate behaviour, escorts around schools, clear identification of visitors in schools, a named person to report concerns or incidents to and observable working areas, where possible, all contribute to making safer working environments for both pupils, staff and visitors.

### **Advice**

The Education Child Protection Support Service for Schools (CPSSS) is available to offer the Principal advice about child protection concerns, while Education Authority H.R. departments can advise about vetting requirements, procedures and issues.

## **The Selection and Use of Volunteers and Sports Coaches to Support School Activities**

### **Introduction**

Volunteers can have an important and beneficial role in supporting the work of teachers and other paid staff in schools and in contributing, by their efforts and initiative, to the life of the school through assisting, for example, at school events and organising fund-raising activities. Ensuring that schools obtain the maximum benefit from the involvement of volunteers requires careful preliminary planning to ensure that the volunteer has appropriate and worthwhile duties; understands and is equipped to carry out his/her role; and can complement and support the activities of the professional teacher or other member of staff. It is also essential that appropriate steps are taken, through screening and selection arrangements, to ensure that children are not placed at risk through allowing the unsupervised and unmanaged access of unsuitable adults to the school.

The following guidance recommends procedures which our has put in place to ensure not only that maximum benefit is obtained from the contribution which volunteers can offer but also that unsuitable people are prevented from working with children. It draws on good practice and advice on the selection of volunteers.

## Who is a Volunteer?

For the purpose of this guidance, a volunteer is an individual who, subject to the satisfactory completion of the procedures set out below, either:

- (i) assumes unpaid duties in a school on a regular basis on more than two occasions or;
- (ii) is engaged by the school to accompany or assist in school visits or trips; summer activity schemes or residential activities; or to undertake coaching in sports activities.

Within this definition, volunteering can take many forms, not all of which will involve direct, unsupervised or substantial access to children on which the need for vetting, including criminal records checks, must be assessed. Formal arrangements as to selection and vetting should not be required for volunteers who are involved outside school hours and who do not have unsupervised contact with pupils. These would include parents involved in fund-raising events and using the school premises for meetings; parents and others carrying out self-help projects for the school; parents supervising at school functions where school staff are also present.

## Use of Volunteers

There are three main categories into which the use of volunteers might be grouped and to which this guidance would mainly apply:

### **a. During School Hours involving direct contact with Pupils:**

This might include direct assistance for pupils (e.g. reading or writing activity under the supervision of a teacher); assistance with basic classroom tasks to release the teacher to work with pupils (e.g. preparation and distribution of materials, setting up of equipment); and assistance with the supervision of pupils on educational visits.

**b. Outside School Hours involving direct contact with Pupils:** This might include assistance to teachers in contexts such as: residential trips; summer activity programmes or literacy/numeracy schemes; Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme activities; homework or other after-school clubs; accompanying school teams to sports fixtures; and sports coaching.

### **c. During School Hours but not usually involving direct contact with Pupils:**

This would typically include clerical and administrative tasks in the school office, library or resources area.

## There are now (Circular 2012/19) 2 types of volunteers:

1. Those who work unsupervised;
2. Those who work under supervision.

If a volunteer works unsupervised in a "Regulated Activity" - see list below, then they need to be vetted through an EDC from Access NI - make sure to complete Boxes H7 & H8 appropriately.

### **"Regulated Activity" List**

Under the new DBA the scope of Regulated Activity will include unsupervised activities including:

- Teaching;
- Training;
- Instructing;
- Caring for or supervising children;
- Providing advice/guidance on wellbeing;
- Driving a vehicle only for children.

If a volunteer is reasonably supervised (regular & day to day) then the school does not need an EDC. The school can however obtain an EDC if they so wish but can't request a check of the "barred lists" – check with AccessNI for advice. If in doubt get an EDC. DE funds the costs of EDC's for volunteers.

## **Paid Staff**

All newly appointed paid staff (Teaching, Non-Teaching, Office, Catering, Cleaning & Caretaking) still need to be vetted - see 2013/19 in Safeguarding Circular Pack.

The chart below outlines the process and the factors the school needs to consider in respect of the supervision of volunteers:

## **Recruiting and Selecting Volunteers**

A school may canvass for volunteers or people may come forward to offer assistance at their own initiative. In many cases, potential volunteers may already be known to the school. These might include parents, or individuals whose involvement might be recommended to the school by members of staff. Others may come forward from the local community, for example, to seek a useful voluntary activity or experience of working in a school to inform a future career choice.

The engagement of volunteers should only be undertaken with the agreement of the Principal. Acceptance of any individual's offer of help should not be automatic, nor should the school feel under any obligation to accept all or any offers of voluntary assistance.

The actual needs of the school for voluntary support; appropriate areas of work and the duties attaching to these; the supervisory arrangements; the implications for child protection; and the conditions and expectations attached to the volunteer's role, should be clearly established by the school before any volunteer is accepted by the school.

## **Initial Appraisal**

As a first step the school should explain to the potential volunteer the procedures which must be undergone before he/she can be accepted into the school. It should then seek to assess the individual's personal skills and experience against the duties and activities which have been identified as appropriate for voluntary assistance. As a minimum requirement all potential volunteers coming within the categories listed above should be asked to provide the following information:

- personal details such as name (including any previous names) and address; date of birth and any relationship with the school e.g. parent, relative of member of paid staff etc.;
- details of any qualifications and of any previous work with children;

The volunteer may be asked to provide the names of two referees who are not family members or members of the staff of the school. The publication "Our Duty to Care" contains a sample volunteer reference form on which the school may wish to draw in preparing their own forms. A copy of this is reproduced (with minor adaptations for school use) at Annex 1 to this policy. It is important that the referees are asked to declare any reasons why the potential volunteer would not be suitable to work with children.

The volunteer will be asked to attend an interview with the school Principal or his/her nominee (such as the class teacher, in the case of parents helping with reading schemes) at which their motivation, skills and personal qualities can be assessed at first hand. As well as the information at i. and ii., proof of identity should also be made available at the interview. A model application form for voluntary activities is included at Annex 2 if needed.

No individual should be admitted to the school as a volunteer until at least these basic steps have been completed and the results assessed. References especially should always be taken up. Schools should not feel under any obligation to waive these procedures because, for example, they feel that they may cause offence to individuals such as parents, friends or acquaintances of staff, or sports personalities. The school's overriding duty is to protect the children in its care from contact with unsuitable individuals and genuine volunteers should not be deterred by the degree of scrutiny which a school accords their involvement in its work.

### **Accepting Volunteers**

Where the procedures set out above have been followed as appropriate and the school is consequently satisfied that:

The volunteer is a suitable person to have contact with children and has the character, skills and experience to support the work of the school in a voluntary capacity;

Well-defined and worthwhile activities have been identified for the volunteer to undertake and he/she is competent to undertake them; the school may notify the individual that he/she has been accepted for voluntary duties in the school.

### **The Use of Volunteers**

Some fundamental principles should be observed by schools in using volunteers:

The purpose of the volunteer is to assist staff, whether teaching or non-teaching. They should not be used as substitutes either to cover activities normally undertaken by paid staff who are absent, or to release such staff to undertake other duties;

Unvetted volunteers should only work under the supervision and guidance of paid staff and these arrangements should be such as to minimise the opportunities for direct, unsupervised, access to children;

Volunteers should not be placed in a position of sole responsibility for the security of children, premises or equipment unless suitably vetted through Access NI;

Volunteers should understand the tasks which they are to undertake and receive appropriate training to enable them to perform these; tasks should not be allocated until the Principal is satisfied that the volunteer is competent to perform them;

Volunteers should only be allocated duties after consultation and agreement with the teacher or other member of staff with whom the volunteer will be most closely involved. Teachers will not be placed under any pressure to accept volunteers in their classroom;

Volunteers should not be afforded access to records or other information relating to staff or pupils. An exception might be made where a child has a medical or other condition of which all those working with him/her should be made aware, and where the agreement of the parent has been sought.

## **Health and Safety and Insurance**

Volunteers are owed a duty of care under the requirements of Health and Safety legislation. Schools should therefore ensure that volunteers are treated no less favourably than paid employees in terms of the schools' obligations under the legislation. The schools will therefore seek advice from the Education Authority as appropriate, on the health and safety, and insurance, implications of engaging volunteers.

## **Duration**

The school may place a time limit on the period of the volunteer's service. It may be useful to do this where the work earmarked for the volunteer is likely to be completed within a specific period; or to enable the school to introduce new volunteers in due course: particular individuals should not be given an indeterminate or monopoly position in volunteer work for the school. In all cases where a volunteer's involvement is likely to be long-term, the school will advise the volunteer that he/she will be subject to a trial period, for example, one month, during which the Principal, in conjunction with the member of staff supervising the volunteer, should monitor the volunteer's effectiveness in contributing to the life and work of the school. Issues to be considered will include: punctuality; reliability; competence in the tasks allocated to them; quality of work; and, where they are involved in classroom activities, their effectiveness in supporting the teacher; and the appropriateness and success of their interaction with the children.

## **Information and Training**

The school will ensure that the volunteer receives such information, guidance, preparation and, where necessary, training to enable him/her to perform tasks effectively. As a minimum, volunteers should be briefed on:

The policy of the school and the management authority in relation to pastoral care, including:

The Behaviour and Discipline Policy, including rewards and sanctions, and the extent of the volunteer's authority within it;

The Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures;

The Health and Safety Policy.

The school has a procedure for dealing with complaints against volunteers. Arrangements will also be made for the volunteer to have a formal line of communication to a member of staff for reporting issues of concern, either relating to their duties or the welfare of children in the school.

## **School Security: Identification of Volunteers**

The admission of volunteers to school premises has clear implications for school security. Other than in the smallest schools, it will not always be possible for all staff to distinguish between the genuine volunteer and an unauthorised person. The guidance document "Security and Personal Safety in Schools" issued by DENI in 1997 provides useful advice on visitors' access control, and schools should consider drawing upon this in establishing arrangements for the admission and supervision of volunteers on school premises.

## **The school will in particular consider:**

Requiring the volunteer to register at the beginning of each visit;  
Providing the volunteer with a readily identifiable name pass giving his/her name and status;  
Limiting the access of the volunteer to particular areas of the school premises.

Schools should ensure that badges or passes are surrendered at the end of each day and when the volunteers' involvement with the school comes to an end.

## **Use of Coaches for Sport**

The school may also wish to use adults to assist teachers in providing a range of sporting activities, including sports activities which take place as part of residential visits to outdoor pursuits centres, and skiing trips abroad. It is therefore important that schools also satisfy themselves as to the suitability of any voluntary or paid coaches which they engage to work with children in these settings as such work will usually involve substantial access to pupils. In this context, suitability does not relate solely to competence in the particular sport, but also to their ability to work successfully with children in a way that is consistent with the school's approach to sports activity.

If the coach has unsupervised access to pupils, in addition to the check on previous criminal convictions described earlier, schools should seek to ensure that coaches meet two requirements:

**1. Technical competence to coach the activity.** Evidence should be sought of:  
Qualification as a specialist PE teacher; or qualification as a teacher of other subjects who has also successfully completed training in the teaching and organization of the particular sport; and a current qualification through a recognised national governing body coaching award.

**2. Pastoral competence in working with children.** Evidence should be sought of:  
Successful completion of specific training in work with children and young people; or previous experience of working with children and young people over a period of time.

Schools should be aware that the Sports Council for Northern Ireland has produced a Factsheet on Child Protection in Sport which provides advice on a wide range of issues relating to the involvement of adults in children's sports. Particular attention should be paid to the "Code of Behaviour" for coaches which is contained within the Factsheet and schools should obtain an assurance from coaches that they will adhere to this Code. Useful advice is also contained in "Safe Practice in Physical Education" which was issued to all schools by DENI.

## Annex 1

### Confidential

#### Volunteer Reference Form: St Oliver Plunkett Primary School

\_\_\_\_\_ has expressed an interest in becoming a volunteer, and has given your name as a referee. If you are happy to complete this reference, all the information contained on the form will remain absolutely confidential, and will only be shared with the applicant's immediate supervisor should he/she be offered a volunteer position. We would appreciate your being extremely candid in your evaluation of this person.

1. How long have you known this person?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. In what capacity?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What attributes does this person have that would make him/her a suitable volunteer?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. How would you describe his/her personality?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Please rate this person on the following qualities (please tick one box on each line):

Qualities	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Responsibility					
Maturity					
Self-Motivation					
Can Motivate Other					
Commitment					
Energy					
Trustworthiness					
Reliability					

This post involves substantial access to children. As a school, which is committed to the welfare and protection of children, we are anxious to know if you have any reason at all to be concerned about this applicant being in contact with children or young people.

**Yes**

**No** (Please Circle)

If you have circle YES (meaning you have some concerns) we will contact you in confidence.

Please print your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please sign: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Annex 2

### Confidential

#### Volunteer Application Form: St Oliver Plunkett Primary School

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Previous names (where applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (Home): \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship with School \_\_\_\_\_  
(e.g. parent, former pupil, friend/relative of member of staff.)

Relevant qualifications for role:

#### Key Questions:

Q1. Have you previously been involved in voluntary work involving children and young people? Yes/No (please circle) If yes, please give details below.

\_\_\_\_\_

Q2. Do You Have: A current driving licence? Yes/No (please circle) Do you have the use of a car? Yes/No (please circle).

Q3. What days and times are you available to volunteer?

Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Occasional
Times						

Q4. Do you have any disabilities which would affect the type of voluntary work you could undertake?

Yes/No (please circle). If yes, please give details below.

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### Referees

Please give the names and addresses of two referees who may be approached to support your application for voluntary activities. Referees should not be family members or members of the staff of the school.

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Name:</b>
<b>Relationship to Volunteer</b> e.g. minister, employer or bank manager.	<b>Relationship to Volunteer:</b>
<b>Address:</b>	<b>Address:</b>
<b>Phone Number:</b>	<b>Phone Number:</b>

Please include any other information that would support your application as a volunteer in Whitehouse Primary School.

### CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECKS

Voluntary activities in the school may involve substantial contact with children and it may therefore be necessary to arrange for a Criminal Records Check to be carried out on certain applicants, depending on the activities they will undertake. Please sign the declaration below, indicating whether you are willing for such a check to be carried out on you.

### DECLARATION

The information above is correct. I have declared any criminal convictions as listed above.

I give/I do not (please circle) give my permission for a Criminal Records check to be made should this be considered necessary.

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

