



Scoil San Treasa

Board of Management



The Rise, Mount Merrion, Co. Dublin A94EK75

Policy on Flight Risk

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1. Purpose and Scope

This policy sets out the school's arrangements to reduce the likelihood of a pupil leaving supervision without agreement, and the actions to be taken if this occurs. It applies during the school day, extracurricular activities, educational visits and any activity for which the school has responsibility.

It should be read with the school's Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment, Code of Behaviour, Bí Cineálta/anti-bullying procedures, Health and Safety Statement, Special Educational Needs policy, Critical Incident policy, educational visits procedures and data protection arrangements.

2. Definitions

Abducting: A pupil moving away from an agreed supervised place, group or adult without agreement, so that staff can no longer provide the expected level of supervision. It includes leaving a classroom, yard, school building, school grounds, transport handover point or off-site group, and hiding or evading supervision where safety is compromised.

Flight risk: A likelihood that a pupil may leave supervision in circumstances that could expose the pupil or others to harm. The label describes a risk to be managed; it is not a diagnosis and should not be used to define the child.

A crisis situation: behaviour that presents a serious risk of imminent physical harm to a pupil or others.

Physical restraint: Physical restraint is any procedure where one or more adults restrict a pupil's physical movement or normal access to their own body. The term physical restraint describes a wide range of actions that involve the use of direct or indirect force, to limit another person's movement. It is an intervention used in crisis situations when not to do so could result in serious physical harm or injury to the student or others.

Seclusion: Placing a pupil alone in an environment and physically preventing the pupil from leaving.

3. Principles

The policy is informed by the eight principles of NCSE Relate: rights based; student voice; regulation first; neurodiversity affirming; solution focused; staff and student wellbeing; unconditional positive regard; and Universal Design for Learning.

- Safety, dignity, rights and the best interests of the child guide every response.
- Behaviour is communication. Staff seek to understand distress, sensory needs, anxiety, trauma, communication differences, impulsivity, peer difficulties, transitions and environmental triggers.
- Relationships and connection are central. Regulation comes before reasoning, problem-solving or discussion of expectations.
- Prevention, positive relationships, co-regulation and de-escalation take priority over reactive measures.
- Responses are individualised, non-punitive, neurodiversity-affirming, proportionate and use the least intrusive option likely to restore safety.
- Parents/guardians and, where appropriate, the pupil, are partners in assessment, planning and review.
- The safety/wellbeing of other pupils and staff are considered alongside the needs of the pupil at risk.
- Professional judgement and a dynamic risk assessment are required in the circumstances as they unfold.
- Information is shared only with those who need it to keep the pupil and others safe.

4. Identification, assessment and planning

A single incident may require review; repeated incidents, a near miss, or information from parents or professionals will trigger an individual risk assessment. The Principal/Deputy Principal coordinates this process with the class teacher, SET/SNA staff, parents/guardians, the pupil where appropriate, and relevant external professionals.

- the function and possible triggers of the behaviour, including times, places, demands and transitions;
- the pupil's communication profile, regulation needs, strengths, preferences and early warning signs;
- danger awareness, mobility, likely destinations and particular environmental hazards;
- supervision and staffing arrangements, including arrival, dismissal, yard, stairs, gates and outings;
- successful preventive, de-escalation and recovery strategies;
- how assistance will be summoned and who will supervise other pupils;
- clear thresholds for contacting parents/guardians, An Garda Síochána or emergency services;
- arrangements for school trips and for communicating essential information to relevant staff.

The resulting Individual Safety and Support Plan will be practical, accessible to relevant staff, rehearsed where appropriate, and reviewed at agreed intervals and after every significant incident. Planning may draw on NCSE Relate tools such as Getting to Know Me, the Stressor Tool, Solution-Focused Goal Setting and the Phases of Support template.

5. Preventive arrangements

5.1 Whole-school measures

- clear routines, boundaries and visual cues for movement around the school;
- regular checks of gates, external doors, fences, without creating unsafe barriers to emergency exits;
- appropriate supervision at known trigger points, including transitions, yard and arrival/dismissal;
- staff induction and briefings on this procedure and on individual plans on a need-to-know basis;
- systems for summoning assistance without leaving a class unsupervised;
- risk assessment and additional planning for outings, transport and unfamiliar environments.

5.2 Individual supports

- predictable visual schedules, countdowns and advance notice of change;
- clear, brief language and the pupil's preferred communication system;
- planned movement, sensory or regulation breaks;
- safe choices, reduced communication load and task adjustment during rising distress;
- a voluntarily accessed low-stimulation space;
- positive reinforcement for using agreed communication and regulation strategies.

5.3 Applying NCSE Relate

NCSE Relate supports staff to move from asking only what behaviour occurred to understanding why it may be occurring and what barriers or stressors can be reduced. Its six connected elements guide planning and review: Understanding, Relationships, Exploring, Classroom, Teaching and Reflecting. Staff use these elements flexibly rather than as a fixed sequence.

Individual plans should describe the adult response across the three Relate Phases of Support:

- Preventing: recognise and reduce stressors while the pupil is calm, ready and engaged; build relationships, participation, communication and predictable supports.
- Supporting: when the pupil may be moving into fight, flight or freeze, reduce language and demands, allow time and space, use calm co-regulation and prioritise immediate safety.
- Restoring: once the pupil is recovering, regulate and relate before attempting to reason; reconnect without blame, restore wellbeing and learn collaboratively from the incident.

6. Immediate response procedure

The response lead is the nearest available staff member until the Principal or relevant teacher/SNA assumes coordination. Staff should communicate calmly and avoid making sudden physical contact unless immediately necessary for safety.

6.1 If the pupil leaves an agreed area but remains within the building or grounds

- a. Alert the office/Principal using the agreed internal method; give the pupil's name and direction of travel.
- b. Maintain sight or awareness where safe. Use one familiar adult where possible; additional adults should position themselves discreetly to protect exits or hazards without surrounding the pupil.
- c. Ensure the remaining pupils continue to be supervised. Move peers only where a dynamic risk assessment indicates this is the safer option.
- d. Use the pupil's agreed de-escalation supports: calm tone, minimal language, acknowledgement of emotion, personal space, simple choices, preferred communication and access to a safe regulating activity or place.
- e. Remove hazards and reduce demands.
- f. When the pupil is safe, allow time for recovery before discussion. Inform parents/guardians in line with the plan and the seriousness of the incident, and make a factual record.

6.2 If the pupil leaves the school grounds or is missing

- a. Treat the matter as urgent. Inform the Principal/office immediately and note the time, last known location, clothing, direction of travel and any known destination.

- b. Call 112/999 or the local Garda station without delay where there is any possibility of danger when the pupil cannot be located promptly. Do not delay an emergency call while trying to contact parents.
- c. Contact the parents/guardians immediately. Ask about likely destinations and agree who will search or attend, without transferring the school's immediate duty of care.
- d. A staff member may maintain visual contact or follow only where this can be done safely and without abandoning other pupils. Staff should not place themselves or others at serious risk.
- e. The Principal coordinates available staff, preserves supervision in the school, keeps a communication log and provides Gardaí with relevant information.
- f. When the pupil is found, prioritise health, calm and safe return. Seek medical assistance if required.

7. Dynamic risk assessment and physical intervention

At every stage the following will be considered: What is the immediate risk? Who may be harmed, how seriously and how soon? What hazards are present? What is the least intrusive action likely to keep people safe? What help is available? The assessment is continuous and the response changes as the risk changes.

Physical restraint may be considered only in a genuine crisis situation involving serious and imminent risk of physical harm, after or alongside de-escalation where practicable, and only for the shortest time and to the minimum extent necessary.

- A member of staff should not intervene alone where this would create a serious risk of injury or where they cannot apply a safe and proportionate response.
- Emergency action taken in loco parentis must remain reasonable, necessary and proportionate to the immediate risk.
- Any injury or suspected injury is assessed promptly and medical assistance is sought where required.

8. Recovery, communication and support after an incident

- Re-establish safety and calm; meet immediate physical, sensory, communication and emotional needs.
- Follow the Relate restorative sequence: regulate, relate, then reason. Offer the pupil a developmentally appropriate opportunity to communicate what happened only when regulated.
- Inform parents/guardians as soon as practicable, and immediately following an off-site incident, Garda contact, injury or physical restraint.
- Support pupils who witnessed the event by restoring safety and calm.
- Provide staff with an opportunity for debrief, support and, where relevant, occupational injury reporting.
- Review the risk assessment and Individual Safety and Support Plan through the Relate Reflecting Element, including stressors, environmental barriers, relationships, teaching, staffing, communication and the effectiveness of the response.

9. Recording, reporting and oversight

All incidents in which a pupil leaves supervision and safety is compromised are recorded promptly. The record includes date/time/location, context and antecedents, actions taken, persons notified, outcome, injury or damage, and follow-up decisions. Records are stored securely and retained in line with the school's data protection and records-retention arrangements.

Where physical restraint is used, the school will follow the Department/NCSE procedures then in force. This includes completing and retaining the required records, informing the parent/legal guardian and the Chairperson of the Board of Management as soon as practicable. The item will be included in the Principal's report to the Board of Management, and submitting the required NCSE form. The BoM reviews whether the intervention was justified, proportionate and consistent with guidance, and monitors anonymised patterns and identifies any training/support needs.

Any child protection concern is managed under the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

10. Roles and responsibilities

Board of Management

- ratifies, resources, monitors and reviews this policy and the related health and safety controls;
- seeks assurance on the wellbeing of all concerned following serious incidents;
- reviews anonymised trends, the use of restraint, staff training and corrective action.

Principal / Deputy Principal

- coordinates risk assessment, planning, emergency response, communication and review;
- ensures relevant staff are briefed and that records and statutory/NCSE reports are completed;
- liaises with parents/guardians, Gardaí, emergency services and NEPS/NCSE/CDNT or other professionals as appropriate.

Teachers, SNAs and other staff

- provide vigilant, proportionate supervision and follow agreed plans;
- use preventive, co-regulation and de-escalation strategies and summon help early;
- maintain supervision of other pupils, record incidents and report concerns promptly;
- attend relevant training and raise any practical or safety concern about a plan.

Parents/guardians

- share relevant information, likely destinations, triggers and effective strategies;
- participate in planning/review and keep emergency contact details current;
- respond promptly when contacted, while recognising that emergency services may be contacted first where delay would increase danger.

11. Pupils

Pupils are supported, in an age- and ability-appropriate way, to contribute to plans, identify helpful adults and places, practise communication and regulation strategies, and understand safe boundaries. Their views are recorded and respected insofar as possible while maintaining safety.

12. Training and review

The BoM will identify training needs through risk assessment and incident review. The policy will be reviewed at least every two years, and earlier following a serious incident, repeated incidents, a material change in the school environment, or updated Department, NCSE, child protection, health and safety or data protection requirements.

13. Ratification

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Scoil San Treasa on _____.

It will be made available to staff and parents/guardians and implemented in conjunction with individual risk assessments and the school's related policies.

Signed: *Eoin O'Neill* - Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: *Frances Mullin* - Principal

Date: *14th September 2026* Next scheduled review: *September 2027*

Appendix A - References

The following legislation, national guidance and professional resources informed this policy.

- *Department of Education (2024): Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations: Guidelines for Schools in Supporting Students; Circular 0081/2024; associated Frequently Asked Questions and Resources 1–4.*
- *Department of Education (2026): Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations: Update on Training and Monitoring and Oversight Arrangements (circular issued 14 April 2026)*
- *National Council for Special Education (2025): NCSE Relate, including the eight principles, six elements and resources such as Getting to Know Me, Stressor Tool, Phases of Support and Solution-Focused Goal Setting.*
- *National Council for Special Education: Resource 4: NCSE Record of Incident involving Physical Restraint Form*
- *Department of Education (2025): Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025, together with Children First Act 2015 and Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children;*
- *Government of Ireland, Education Act 1998; Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004; Equal Status Acts 2000–2018; Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005; and Data Protection Act 2018.*
- *European Union, General Data Protection Regulation, Regulation (EU) 2016/679.*
- *United Nations (1989): Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly Articles 3 and 12.*
- *United Nations (2006): Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, particularly Article 7.*
- *Scoil San Treasa: Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment; Code of Behaviour; Bí Cineálta/anti-bullying procedures; Health and Safety Statement; Special Educational Needs Policy; Critical Incident Policy; educational visits procedures; and data protection arrangements.*