

## Code of Conduct for Children's Sport in Our School

### **Core Values in School Sport**

#### Integrity in Relationships:

Teachers and adults interacting with children in school sport must do so with integrity and respect for the child. There is a danger that the sporting context could be used to exploit or undermine children. All adult actions in sport should be guided by what is best for the child. Verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse of any kind is unacceptable within sport.

#### Principle of Fair Play:

Ireland has contributed, and is committed, to the European Code of Sports Ethics, of which fair play is the guiding principle. Fair play is defined as: "much more than playing within the rules. It incorporates the concepts of friendship, respect for others and always playing with the right spirit. Fair play is defined as a way of thinking, not just behaving." (European Sports Charter and Code of Ethics, Council of Europe, 1993). It incorporates issues concerned with the elimination of cheating, gamesmanship, doping, violence (both physical and verbal), sexual harassment and abuse, exploitation, unequal opportunities, excessive commercialisation, and corruption. Our school strives continuously to adhere to this key principle when conducting sports activities.

#### Atmosphere and Ethos:

Children's sport must be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere. A child-centred ethos helps to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place. Too often competitive demands are placed on children too early, and results in excessive levels of pressure on them, with the consequence of high levels of dropout from sport.

Our teachers have an overall responsibility to take the steps necessary to ensure that positive and healthy experiences in sport are provided for the pupils in their care.

#### Equality:

All children in our school are treated in an equitable and fair manner, regardless of age, ability, sex, religion, social and ethnic background or political persuasion (see our School Equality Policy). Children with disability are involved in sports activities in an integrated way, thus allowing them to participate to their potential alongside other children.

Teachers are always mindful of pupil safety, both individually and collectively, in sports participation. If a teacher excludes a pupil from a particular sports activity, for good safety reasons, it is not to be regarded as being contrary to the school ethos of integration and inclusion.

## **Guidelines for Teachers/Coaches/Parents**

Glencastle N.S. is committed to providing a safe and fair environment for all participating in sport. Our teachers' first priority is the welfare of their pupils, and we are committed to providing an environment which allows participants in our school's sporting activities to perform to the best of their ability, free from bullying and intimidation. The school has a duty of care for coaches working with pupils on behalf of the school to:

- be a role model for children, and maintain the highest standards of conduct when interacting with children, parents, officials and organisers
- encourage children to play by the rules
- always behave responsibly on the sidelines and not seek to unfairly affect the game or sport
- take care not to expose any player, intentionally or unintentionally, to embarrassment or disparagement by the use of flippant or sarcastic remarks
- respect referees, coaches, organisers, and other players
- not publicly question the judgement or honesty of referees, coaches or organisers
- teach children that honest endeavour is as important as winning, and do all they can to encourage good sportsmanship
- set a good example by applauding good play on both sides
- encourage mutual respect for team-mates and opponents.

Parents should support all efforts to remove abusive and bullying behaviour in all its forms:

- Child to Child – including physical aggression, verbal bullying, intimidation, or isolation;
- Adult to Child – including the use of repeated gestures or expressions of a threatening or intimidatory nature, or any comment intended to degrade the child;
- Adult to Adult – including verbal aggression towards other adults in order to achieve a beneficial outcome for own self or own child;
- Child to Adult – including repeated gestures or expressions of a threatening or intimidatory nature by an individual child or a group of children.

## **Guidelines for Coaches**

Teachers have the ultimate duty of care to ensure that all coaches/selectors/team managers working with the school have as their first priority the children's safety and enjoyment of the sport, and adhere to the guidelines and regulations set out.

Coaches must respect the rights, dignity and worth of every child, and must treat everyone equally, regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion or ability. A coach of school teams has a duty of care which is more onerous than that of a coach to an adult team. A coach must act as a role model, promote the positive aspects of sport, and maintain the highest standards of personal conduct.

Coaches should remember that their behaviour to players, other officials, and opponents has an effect on the players in their care. Coaches should be generous with praise, and never ridicule or shout at players for making mistakes or for losing a game. Care must be taken not to expose a child intentionally or unintentionally to embarrassment or disparagement by use of sarcastic or flippant remarks about the child or his/her family. Physical punishment or physical force must never be used. Coaches should never punish a mistake – by verbal means, physical means, or exclusion. All young players are entitled to respect.

Coaches should be careful to avoid the "star system"; each child deserves equal time and attention.

Coaches must insist that players in their care respect the rules of the game. They must insist on fair play, and ensure that players know that cheating or bullying behaviour will not be tolerated. Coaches must encourage the development of respect for opponents, officials, selectors and other coaches, and avoid criticism of fellow coaches.

Coaches must remember that our pupils play for fun and enjoyment, and that skill and playing for fun have priority over highly structured competition. Coaches must never make winning the only objective. Coaches must set realistic goals for the team and for the individual players, and not push young players; a safe and enjoyable environment must be created.

It is advisable to:

- record attendance at training
- keep a brief record of injuries and actions taken
- keep a brief record of problem/action/outcome if behavioural problems arise and a young player has to face disciplinary procedures.

#### Good Practice Guidelines

All personnel are encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegation (see Child Protection School Policy). It is important to realise that certain situations or friendly actions could be misinterpreted by participants or by observers. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate:

- always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging an open environment, e.g. no secrets)
- treating all pupils equally, with respect and dignity

- always putting the welfare of each child first, before winning or achieving goals
- maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with sports participants
- building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empower pupils to share in decision-making
- making sport fun and enjoyable
- promoting fair play
- involving parents/carers wherever possible (e.g. for the responsibility of their children in the changing rooms); if groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, it should always be ensured that parents/teachers/coaches/officials work in pairs
- giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback, encouraging achievements rather than negative criticism
- recognising the developmental needs and capacity of children, including those disabled – avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will
- securing parental consent in writing to act in loco parentis; e.g. if the need arises, for the administration of emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment
- keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given
- requesting written parental consent if club officials are required to transport young people in their cars, and not doing so without the presence of a second adult
- immediately reporting any accusations made against a person
- avoiding spending any time alone with a child away from others.

### **Teachers/Coaches have the following Responsibilities:**

#### Personal behaviour

- To behave in a way which sets good example and presents a positive role model for children and young people; not in any way to reward, demonstrate personally, nor condone in others unfair play, and to take appropriate sanctions against this type of behaviour.
- To ensure that their own level of training and qualification is appropriate to the needs of the child as he or she moves through different stages of sporting commitment.

#### When working with children

- To put as a first priority the health, safety and welfare of the child, and to ensure that such considerations come before vicarious achievement, or the reputation of the school, coach or parent.
- To provide a sporting experience for children that encourages a life-long commitment to health-related physical activity.
- To avoid treating children simply as small adults, but to be aware of the physical and psychological changes that occur during maturation, and how these affect sporting performance.
- To avoid placing on a child expectations unrelated to his or her capacity to meet them.
- To make the enjoyment of the participant a priority, and never to place undue pressure that may impinge on the rights of the child to choose to participate.
- To take as much interest in the less talented as in the talented, and to emphasise and reward personal levels of achievement and skill acquisition in addition to more overt competitive success
- To encourage children to devise their own games with their own rules, to take on the roles of the coach, official, and referee, in addition to participant; to devise their own incentives and sanctions for fair and unfair play, and to take personal responsibility for their actions
- To provide the child and child's family with as much information as possible to ensure awareness of the potential risks and attractions of reaching levels of high performance.

## **Rights and Responsibilities**

### Pupils have a right to:

- be safe
- be listened to
- be respected
- privacy
- enjoy sports in a protective environment
- be protected from abuse
- participate on an equal basis, appropriate to ability
- experience competition and the desire to win
- be believed
- ask for help.

Pupils are responsible for:

- showing respect to other players and leaders
- keeping themselves safe
- reporting inappropriate behaviour or risky situations
- playing fairly
- respecting opponents
- having respect for officials and accepting decisions
- showing appropriate loyalty
- not cheating
- not using violence
- their behaviour in defeat.

Teachers have a right to:

- access ongoing training and information on managing activities for young players, particularly on child protection
- support in reporting suspected abuse
- respect from players and supporters
- be protected from abuse by players and supporters
- not be left vulnerable when working with children.

Teachers Have a Responsibility for:

- using appropriate team management behaviour to ensure safety of those in the group
- ensuring the principle of 'Fair Play'
- responding to pupil concerns about alleged abuse
- ensuring that the rights and responsibilities of pupils are enforced
- reporting suspected abuse to the Designated Liaison Person
- engaging in good practice and encouraging good practice in others

- maintaining confidentiality about sensitive information
- being an appropriate role model.

Parents have a Right to:

- know that their child is safe
- be informed of problems or concerns relating to their children
- have their consent sought for issues such as trips away
- complain appropriately if they have concerns about coaches, players, or other adults
- have their concerns treated seriously
- be protected from other adults behaving inappropriately.

Parents are Responsible for:

- encouraging their child to play by the rules
- respecting their child and teaching them that they can only do their best
- insisting that their child shows respect for coaches and others involved in sports activities
- behaving responsibly on the sideline
- showing respect and appreciation for teachers and coaches involved in their child's sporting activities
- accepting their child's ability and ambitions
- ensuring that their child's needs are met.

This list is not exhaustive and is by no means definitive.

See also School Child Protection Policy.

Guidelines on use of photographic and filming equipment at competitions and practice sessions

Amateur photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek accreditation with the event organiser or teacher of practice session.

During competitions or practice sessions, children must not be photographed or filmed without their permission and the express permission of one of their parents or person acting for the parent. A record should be kept of any permission granted.

Professional photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek accreditation with the event organiser by producing their professional identification for the details to be recorded. A record should be kept of accreditations.

Video-taping as a coaching aid: Video equipment can be used as a legitimate coaching aid. However, permission should first be obtained from the player and the player's parent/carer.

Anyone concerned about any photography taking place at events or training sessions can contact the teacher/organiser, and ask them to deal with the matter.