



# **Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures**

**Roll No: 18377A**

**Principal: Geraldine Burke**

**Deputy Principal:**

**Chairperson: Brian Shinnick**

## **Policy Statement:**

St Joseph's National School, Fermoy aims to provide its pupils with the highest standards of care and protection, in order to promote each child's well-being and safe guard him/her from harm. Our pupils have rights, which must be respected, and responsibilities that they must accept. They will be encouraged to realise that they have responsibilities to treat other pupils with courtesy and respect. All children should be treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of age, ability, sex, religion, social and ethnic background or political persuasion.

## **Types of Child Abuse:**

- Neglect: Wilful and Circumstantial
- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse

## **Roles and Responsibilities:**

### **Designated Liaison Person:**

All Boards of Management must appoint a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) to have specific responsibility for Child Protection.

The Board of Management of St Joseph's National School has nominated the following personnel to act as Designated Liaison Persons:

- Designated Liaison Person: The Principal Teacher- **Geraldine Burke**
- Deputy Designated Liaison Person: The Deputy Principal Teacher-**Mahon O'Keeffe**

The DLP has a specific responsibility for child protection and will represent the school in all dealings with the Health Board, An Garda Siochana and other parties in connection with allegations of abuse. All matters pertaining to the

processing or investigation of child abuse must be processed through the DLP or the Deputy DL P.

### **Child Welfare and Protection Procedures**

Child Welfare and the protection of young people are the concern of adults at all times, irrespective of their role within the school

### **Guidelines for teachers/ancillary staff**

All signs and symptoms must be examined in the total context of the child's situation and family circumstances. There are commonly three stages in the identification of child abuse.

These are:

1. Considering the possibility
2. Looking out for signs of abuse
3. Recording the information

Everyone should follow the procedures outlined below:

- The procedure for responding to a disclosure from a child
- The procedure for reporting the concern

### **Procedure for responding to a disclosure:**

When information is offered in confidence staff will act with sensitivity in responding to the disclosure. The member of staff will need to reassure the child and retain his/her trust, while clearly explaining the need for action and possible consequences, which will necessarily involve other adults being informed. It is important to tell the child that everything possible will be done to protect and support him/her but not to make promises that cannot be kept, e.g. promising not to tell anyone else. The welfare of the child is regarded as the first and paramount consideration. In so far as is practicable, due consideration will be given, having regard to the age and understanding, to the wishes of the child.

The following advice is offered to school personnel to whom a child makes a disclosure of abuse:

- Remain calm
- Listen to the child with sensitivity and openness
- Take all disclosures seriously
- Do not ask leading questions or make suggestions to the child
- Offer reassurance but do not make promises
- Do not stop a child recalling significant events
- Do not over react or show any extreme reaction
- Explain that further help may have to be sought
- Record the discussion accurately and retain the record of dates, times, names, locations, context and factual details of conversation.
- Pass on this information to the Designated Liaison Person who will ensure that it is stored in a safe place away from the ordinary records that are kept on pupils.
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by telling you.

The Chairperson of the Board of Management will be informed before the DLP makes contact with the relevant authorities, unless the situation demands that more immediate action be taken for the safety of the child, in which case, the Chairman may be informed after the report has been submitted.

Any professional who suspects child abuse should inform parents/carers if a report is to be submitted to the Health Board or An Garda Siochana unless doing so is likely to endanger the child.

In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate or serious risk, and a duty social worker is unavailable, An Garda Siochana should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending HSE intervention.

### **The Reporting Procedure:**

If the DLP has reasonable grounds for concern, the matter should be reported to the HSE/Social Services, following the standard reporting procedure. School



employees, other than the DLP, who receive allegations against another school employee, should immediately report the matter to the DLP. School employees who form suspicions regarding conduct of another school employee should consult the DLP.

**Person against whom the allegation is made:**

While the DLP makes the report to the HSE, the Chairperson of the BOM should deal with the person in question.

The Chairperson should:

- Privately inform the person that an allegation has been made against him/her
- Outline the nature of the allegation
- Indicate whether or not the matter has been reported to the HSE by the DLP
- Give the employee a copy of the written allegation and ask him/her to respond in writing
- If the nature of the allegation warrants immediate action, the Chairperson should direct the employee to absent him/herself from school with immediate effect.
- Consult the Director of Community Care if unsure of the nature of the allegation.
- Contact the Department of Education and Skills to formally approve paid leave of absence and sanction approval of a substitute.
- Immediately inform the Board of Management and stress the importance of adherence to strict confidentiality.

The Board of Management will comply with the Statutory Authorities regarding any investigation.

**Protection for persons reporting Child Abuse:**

The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act (1998) provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse reasonably and in good

faith to designated officers of the HSE or any member of the Garda Síochána (see 5.1.13-ISC code).

The main provisions of the Act are:

- The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse “reasonably and in good faith” to designated officers of the HSE or any member of An Garda Síochána.
- The provision of significant protections for employees who report child abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to and including dismissal.
- The creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities “knowing that statement to be false”. This is a new criminal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

### **Confidentiality:**

The Chairperson should inform the Board of Management of all the details and remind the members of their serious responsibility to maintain strict confidentiality on all matters relating to the issue and the principles of due process and natural justice.

The following points should be kept in mind:

### **Procedures for reporting suspected or disclosed child abuse:**

- If a school employee receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a pupil is being abused the school employee should, in the first instance, report the matter to the DLP.
- If the school employee and the DLP are satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation the DLP should report the matter to the HSE/Social Services, who have statutory responsibility to investigate and assess suspected or actual child abuse.
- Grounds for concern include a specific indication from a child, a statement from a person who witnessed abuse, an illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse.

- If the DLP is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist he/she can informally consult with the HSW/Social Services. He/she will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report.
- A formal report may be made by telephone or in writing to the HSE.
- In cases of emergency where a child appears to be at immediate risk, and the DLP is unable to contact the duty social worker, members of the Garda Síochána should be contacted. Under no circumstances, should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the statutory authorities.
- When a report is being made to the HSE, the Chairperson of the Board of Management should be informed.
- Parents/guardians should be informed that a report is being made unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or place the child at further risk.
- It is **not** the responsibility of school staff to make enquiries of parents/guardians regarding details of the suspicion/allegation. The HSE must investigate suspected abuse and determine what action is to be taken.
- Should the DLP decide not to act on the reported concern and the school employee remains concerned, he/she is free to consult with /report directly to the Health Board.

### **Allegations against Teachers/Other Members of School Community**

The most important consideration for the Chairperson, Board of Management or the DLP is the safety and protection of the child. However, employees and those in the school community also have a right to protection against claims which are false or malicious.

As employers, the Board of Management should always seek legal advice as the circumstances can vary from one case to another.

These are the two procedures to be followed:

1. The reporting procedure in respect of suspected child abuse.
2. The procedure for dealing with the person against whom the allegation is made (carried out by the Chairperson of the BOM)

Where an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee, the DLP should act immediately in accordance with the guidelines. A written statement should be sought from the person making the allegation. The safety of the child making the allegation should be considered and the safety of any other children who may be at risk. The school will take any necessary steps that may be needed to protect the children in its care. The issue of confidentiality is important. Information is on a need to know basis and the person against whom the allegation is made should be treated with respect and fairness. If the allegation is against the DLP, the Chairperson of the Board of Management will assume responsibility for reporting the matter to the HSE/Social Services.

- A guarantee of confidentiality or undertakings regarding secrecy cannot be given as the welfare of the child will supersede all other considerations.
- All information should be treated in a careful and sensitive manner and should be discussed only with those who need to know.
- Information should be conveyed in a sensitive manner to the parents/guardians of the child, about whom there are concerns, assuming the allegation is not against the parent/guardian.
- Giving information to others on a 'need to know' basis for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality.
- All persons involved in a child protection process (the child, his/her parents/guardians, the alleged offender, his/her family) should be afforded appropriate respect, fairness, support and confidentiality at all stages of the procedure.
- Information should be stored in a secure place, with access limited to designated people.
- The requirements of the Data Protection laws must be adhered to.
- Breach of confidentiality is a serious matter.

### **Social Trips, Travelling and Supervision:**



There is an extra responsibility taken on by teachers, SNAs and coaches when they travel with children to events. When travelling with young people, please note the following:

- Ensure that there is adequate insurance cover.
- Do not carry more than the permitted number of passengers.
- Ensure use of safety belts on the bus/coach.
- Make sure that there is an adequate adult-child ratio. This will depend on the nature of the activity, the age of the participants and any special needs of the group. The ratio will never be above 1 Adult to 10 Children.
- Avoid being alone with one child. If you need to talk to an individual child do so in an open environment, in view of others.
- Teachers should remain in pairs or accompanied by another adult until all participants have been collected.
- Keep attendance records and record any incidents/injuries that arise.
- Separate permission forms should be signed by parents and participants, containing emergency contact number.
- Communicate with parents and participants with regard to travel times, other activities, gear requirements, medical requirements, special dietary needs and any other necessary details.
- Children should be under reasonable supervision at all times and should never leave a venue or go unsupervised.
- Pupils whose behaviour in school gives cause for concern may not be allowed to go on school tours/outings.

A teacher will always be present when teachers for P.E., dance, games, art; student teachers, childcare workers, Transition Year students, volunteers etc are working with the class.

### **Dissemination of the Policy:**

Parents/guardians will be made aware that the school's policy on Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures is available in hard copy in the Principal Teacher's office. A copy will be available if requested.

Teachers, SNAs and ancillary staff will be given a copy of the policy.  
Parents will be notified of its existence and invited to look at and comment on the policy should they wish to do so.

The policy will review on an annual basis following its implementation.

