



Ard Rí Community National School
Balreask Old,
Navan,
Co. Meath

Roll No. 20352T

Child Protection Policy
January 2014



**Ard Rí Community National School, Balreask Old, Navan,
Co. Meath**

Child Protection Statement

The Single Manager/Board of Management recognises that child protection welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and must be reflected in all the school's policies, practices and activities. Accordingly, in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills' Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, the Board of Management of Ard Rí Community NS has agreed the following child protection policy.

1. The Single Manager/ Board of Management has adopted and will implement fully without modification the Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools as part of this overall child protection policy.
2. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is
Mr. Darragh Roe
3. The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is
Ms. Michelle McHale
4. In its policies, practices and activities, Ard Rí Community NS will adhere to the following principles of the best practice in child protection and welfare.
The school will;
 - recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations;
 - fully co-operate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters.
 - adopt safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to the children and protect workers from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect;
 - develop a practice of openness with parents and encourage parental involvement in the education of their children; and
 - fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.

The school will also adhere to the above principles in relation to any adult pupil with a special vulnerability.

6. This policy has been made available to school personnel and Parents' Association and is readily accessible to parents on request. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.



7. This policy will be reviewed by the Single Manager/Board of Management once in every school year.

This policy was reviewed by the Single Manager/Board of Management on 12th June 2014

Signed: Ms Elizabeth Lavery
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: Mr Darragh Roe
Principal

Date: 12th June 2014

Date of next review: September 2015



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1. Introductory Statement

There is an obligation on schools to provide pupils with the highest possible standard of care in order to promote their well-being and protect them from harm. (DES Child Protection Guidelines 2001). The staff, parents and management of the Ard Rí Community NS School have developed and agreed this policy in line with the current recommendations and guidelines relating to child abuse and child protection guidelines. This policy has also been developed with the safety and welfare of the children in our school as paramount.

This policy addresses the responsibilities of the school in the following areas:

- A) Prevention- curricular provision
- B) Procedures- procedures for dealing with concerns/disclosures
- C) Practice- best practice in child protection

Copies of this policy document and the Department of Education and Science Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures (2001), Children First Guidelines Department of Health and Children (1999) and the relevant recording and reporting forms will be made accessible to all staff on classroom computer desktops, staffroom and office.

This policy, Child Protection procedures and practices and the Care Team policy will be included in the first staff meeting of each new school year. It is incumbent on all staff to familiarize themselves with the above-mentioned documents.

2. Aims

This policy aims to

- Create a safe, trusting, responsive and caring environment
- Provide a personal safety skills education which specifically addresses abuse prevention for all children in the school
- Develop awareness and responsibility in the area of child protection amongst the whole school community
- Put in place procedures for good practice to protect all children and staff
- Ensure that all staff members are aware of and familiar with the 'Children First' (1999) and DES guidelines (2001) and procedures in relation to reporting concerns and/or disclosures of child abuse
- Provide for ongoing training in this and related areas for all school staff



3. Prevention

The Stay Safe programme is the primary resource used in this school to provide education for children on abuse prevention. On enrolment of their child parents will be informed that the Stay Safe programme is in use in the school.

The programme is taught as part of the schools' SPHE programme under the strand unit Safety and Protection. It includes personal safety and safety issues. The formal lessons of the programme will be taught in their entirety every year.

Staff will make every effort to ensure that the messages of the programme are reinforced whenever possible.

4. Procedures

(i) Staff

All staff (Teachers, SNAs, ancillary, secretarial, caretaking etc.) in this school will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in 'Children First' (1999) and the DES 'Child Protection, Guidelines and Procedures' (pp 5 – 20, 2001).

(ii) School Manager

The School Manager of the school will

- Arrange for the planning, development and implementation of an effective child protection programme
- Monitor and evaluate its effectiveness
- Ensure that appropriate training and information on child protection is provided for all staff, parents and School Manager members on a regular basis.

(iii) Designated Liaison Person

Darragh Roe is the Designated Liaison Person (DLP). Michelle McHale is the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLp)

The staff and management of this school have agreed the duties of the DLP are as follows:

- The DLP acts as a liaison with outside agencies, HSE, Gardaí and other parties with child protection concerns
- The DDLp will inform all school personnel of the availability of the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, DES and Children First Guidelines in the school. S/he will circulate the DES guidelines and photocopy/circulate to all staff Chapters 3 & 4 & Appendix 1 of the Children First guidelines and advise on good practice
- The DLP will be available to staff for consultation regarding suspicions or disclosures of abuse. S/he will keep records of these consultations.

- All concerns/ disclosures/allegations involving child protection/child welfare issues will be reported in the first instance to the DLP (deputy DLP where appropriate).
- Each report to the DLP will be dated and signed by the person making that report.
- A strict adherence to maintaining confidentiality – information regarding concerns or disclosures of abuse should only be given on a ‘need to know’ basis.
- The DLP should inform the School Manager that such a report is being made
- The DLP should inform the class teacher(s) of any siblings the child has in the school including the Central Model Senior School

(iv) Confidentiality

All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse should only be shared on a need-to-know basis. Ask yourself whether the person has any legitimate involvement or role in dealing with the issue. Giving information to those who need to have that information for the protection of a child who may have, or has been abused, is not a breach of confidentiality. The DLP, who is submitting a report to the HSE or Gardai Síochána, should inform a parent/guardian, unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or place him/her at further risk. A decision not to inform a parent/guardian should be recorded together with the reason for not doing so. It is not the responsibility of school staff to make enquiries of a parent/guardian. In cases of an emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate risk, and it is not possible to contact the HSE, the Garda Síochána can be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending HSE intervention.

(v) Legislation

Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998.

This Act provides for -

Immunity from civil liability for any person who reports child abuse “reasonably and in good faith” to designated officers of the HSE or any member of the Garda Síochána”. This means that even if a reported suspicion of child abuse proves to be unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the reporter had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report. Significant protections are provided for all employees who report child abuse, up to and including dismissal. The 1998 Act created a new offence of false reporting of child abuse. This is a new criminal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

Also refer to Children First (1999) 2.4 p. 26 and DES Guidelines (2001) 1.4.2 p. 6.

Freedom of Information Act 1997

Any reports which are made to the HSE may be subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 1997 which enables members of the public to obtain access to personnel information relating to them which is in the possession of public bodies. However the Freedom of Information Act 1997 also provides that public bodies may refuse access to information obtained by them if that information is confidential.

Education (Welfare) Act (1997)

Persistent failure to attend school constitutes neglect.



Data Protection Act 1998(Electronic)

Data Protection Act 2003 (Paper)

A parent can request any records kept by a school in a child's name.

Schools are required to keep important documents until a child has reached 18 years of age.

Education Act 1998

The duty of care towards children and protecting their educational rights.

Qualified Privilege

If the School Manager or school personnel reports suspected abuse to the DLP or to the School Manager, such communication would be regarded under common law as having qualified privilege (see Department of Education and Science Child Protection guidelines of 2001, section 1.4.2 and 1.4.3 for further explanation). Those reporting a child's disclosure are not seen to be making an allegation or accusing, but carrying out their duty, acting in loco parentis.

Ref: Children First Chapter II

5. Practice

The staff and School Manager of Ard Rí Community NS have considered the following as areas of specific concern in relation to child protection. Following discussion and consultation with parents the staff and School Manager have agreed that the following practices be adopted.

(i) Induction

All parents will be made aware of attendance rules and their implications as laid down in the Education Welfare Act (2000). All parents are given a copy of the Code of Behaviour/Anti-bullying policy and RSE policy on their child's enrolment and are made aware of their implications. New teachers will be made aware of the school's Child Protection policy and procedures by the DDLP. Students/ volunteers/parents will also be informed of our Child Protection policy by the DDLP before starting their placement in the school. This policy and Child Protection procedures and practices will be included in the first staff meeting of each new school year.

(ii) Physical Contact

Physical contact between school personnel and the child should always be in response to the needs of the child and not the needs of the adult. While physical contact may be used to comfort, reassure or assist a child the following should be factors in determining it's appropriateness:

- It is acceptable to the child
- It is open and not secretive

School personnel should avoid doing anything of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.



(iii) Visitors / Guest Speakers

Visitors/guest speakers should never be left alone with pupils. Visitors/Substitute teachers will have garda vetting if they are to be left alone with children at any time. The school (Principal/teachers) has a responsibility to check out the credentials of the visitor/guest speaker and to ensure that the material in use by guests is appropriate.

Any unaccompanied visitors should be approached by a staff member to ascertain the purpose of their visit and either directed to the principal's office or supervised in the discharge of their business.

(iv) Supervision

School supervision policy will be followed by all staff to ensure there is a comprehensive supervision of children at all breaks. Each teacher has copy of supervision timetable and rota in the staffroom as well.

(v) Administration of First Aid

While every precaution will be taken under our Health and Safety Statement to ensure the safety of children, we realise that accidents will happen. Accidents will be noted in our Incident book and will be addressed under our accident policy as part of Health and Safety. (See also health and Safety Policy)

(vi) Bullying

Children are encouraged to play co-operatively at all times. Inappropriate and bullying behaviour is addressed in our Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policy. If any incident occurs which is considered to be of a sexualized nature the DLP will be notified and will respond accordingly. (See also Code of Behaviour)

(vii) Attendance

Our school attendance will be monitored as per our attendance policy. With regards to child protection we will pay particular attention to trends in non-attendance. We will also monitor non-attendance in correlation with signs of neglect/physical/emotional abuse.

(viii) Communication

Every effort will be made to enhance pupil-teacher communication. If pupils have concerns they will be listened to sympathetically. The SPHE/Oral Language/RE programmes allow for open pupil-teacher communication, which is hoped will aid the pupil-teacher relationship. If teachers have to communicate with pupils on a one-to-one basis, they are requested to leave the classroom door open.

(ix) Children with Specific Toileting / Intimate Care Needs

In all situations where a pupil needs assistance with toileting /intimate care a meeting will be convened, after enrolment and before the child starts school, between parents/guardians, class teacher, special needs assistant, principal and if appropriate the pupil. The purpose of the meeting will be to ascertain the specific needs of the child and to determine how the school can best meet those needs. The staff to be involved in this care will be identified and provision will be made for occasions when those particular staff involved is absent. A written copy of what has been agreed will be made and kept in the child's file. The School Manager will be made aware of the agreed procedures.

Two members of staff will be present when dealing with intimate care/toileting needs. Any deviation from the agreed procedure will be recorded and notified to the DLP and the parents/guardians.

(x) Toileting Accidents

Clean underwear and suitable clothing will be kept in the school so that if a pupil has an accident of this nature they will in the first instance be offered fresh clothing into which they can change. If the pupil for whatever reason cannot clean or change themselves and the parents/guardians cannot be contacted the child will be assisted by members of staff familiar to the child. In all such situations two members of staff should be present. A record of all such incidents will be kept in the Incident Book and principal and parents will be notified.

It is the policy in this school that one-to-one teaching is often in the best interest of the child. Every effort will be made to ensure that this teaching takes place in an open environment, with visibility and accessibility a priority. There are many drop-in visits by the principal to these rooms. Parents of children who are to be involved in one-to-one teaching will be informed and their agreement sought.

Work being carried out by special needs assistants will be carried out under the direction of the class teacher in an open environment.

(xi) Changing for Swimming

Pupils will be expected to dress and undress themselves for swimming. Where assistance is needed this will be done in the communal areas and with the consent of parents. Under no circumstances will members of staff/volunteers be expected to or allowed to dress/undress a child in a cubicle/private area. In such situations where privacy is required the parent/guardian of the child will be asked to assist the child. At all times there must be adequate supervision of pupils. It is forbidden by law to use any photographic or recording technology in swimming pools in Ireland. While every effort will be made to adhere to best practice as agreed and outlined above, in the event of an emergency where this is not possible or practicable a full record of the incident should be made and reported to principal and parents. (See also Swimming Policy)

(xii) Acceptable Internet Use Policy

This policy ensures that pupils will benefit from learning opportunities offered by the school's Internet resources in a safe and effective manner. The school will employ a number of strategies in order to maximize learning opportunities and reduce risks associated with the Internet. (See also Acceptable Internet Use Policy)



(xiii) Court Orders

Where the school is made aware of a court order being in place that prevents someone from having access to a child, a copy of that order will be requested by the school. A copy of this order will be kept in the child's file. In the event of the parent/guardian's non-compliance with the court order the Gardaí should be summoned to the school to enforce it.

6. Handling Disclosure from Children

An abused child is likely to be under severe emotional stress and a staff member may be the only adult whom the child is prepared to trust. Great care should be taken not to damage that trust.

The following advice is offered to school personnel to whom a child discloses abuse.

Do

Do listen attentively

Do accept what the child is saying

Do seek clarity gently

Do reassure the child without making promises

Do explain that further help may have to be sought

Do record in writing what the child has said in as near as possible the words the child told it as soon as possible, noting

- What, where and when?
- Descriptions and possible sketches of physical injuries
- Explanations of injuries using direct quotations if appropriate

Retain the record securely

The DLP should be informed and given relevant records

Don't

Don't ask leading questions

Don't over re-act

Don't promise to keep secrets

Don't conduct your own investigation

Don't inform inappropriate others

Don't promise that a specific action will ensue

Don't embellish or alter the facts, as you know them.

(The lessons of the Stay Safe programme come in to play here, 'good' secrets and 'bad' secrets)

7. Definition of Child Abuse

The 'Children First' guidelines categorize child abuse information into 4 types

- Neglect Ref: Children First 3.2.1 p. 31, appendix 1 p. 125
- Emotional abuse Children First 3.3.1 p. 31, Appendix 1 p. 125 - 126
- Physical abuse Children First 3.3.1 p. 32, appendix 1 p. 126 - 128
- Sexual abuse. Children First 3.3.1 p. 31, Appendix 1 p. 125 - 126

These are carefully discussed on the 'Children First' summary, pages 9-12.

The information also provides information and language that is useful when recording information.

All staff in the school should be familiar with these sections of 'Children First', but should also be aware that indicators of abuse must be examined in the total context of the child's situation and family circumstances.

8. Recognition of Child Abuse

The recognition of abuse normally runs along three stages:

1. Considering the possibility- the appearance of inexplicable/serious injury, child appearing distressed for no obvious reason, unusual behavioural problems or fearful appearance in the company of parent/carer.
2. Observing signs of abuse - patterns of signs is the most reliable indicator of abuse. Children may make direct/indirect disclosures, which should always be taken seriously. Less obvious disclosures may be gently explored without direct questioning e.g.: play situations, drawing, story telling. Indicators of harm must always be considered in relation to the child's social and family context and it is important to be open to explanations.
3. Recording of information-it is important to establish the grounds for concern by obtaining as much detailed information as possible. Observations should be recorded and should include dates, times, names, locations, context and any other relevant information. When questioning a child leading questions should not be asked. Questions should be open ended so as not to lead or prompt the child.

Ref: 3.9.1 p. 34

Children First pp. 105- 108

9. Reporting Procedures

Action by Staff Member-If a school employee receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a pupil is being abused they should record the information and report it to the DLP. Ongoing information may be recorded on the record sheet provided in staff member pack. The pupil name is not to appear on any recording of information; the pupil's roll book registration number is to be used instead. All such information is to be kept in a secure locked place in the school.

Confidentiality is vital at all times.

10. Action by the DLP

If school staff have concerns about a pupil but are not sure whether to make an actual report, the DLP can consult with the HSE making it clear that she is seeking advice and not making a formal report. Identifying details need not be given but if the HSE advises that a referral be made the DLP should act on that advice.

If the DLP is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for suspicion of child abuse she will:

- Report it to the HSE immediately.
- A report should be made to the duty social worker in person by phone or in writing.

Personal contact is the best way to assist the social worker in gathering as much relevant information as possible.

- In the event of an emergency, the report should be made to the Garda Síochána.
- The DLP should provide the HSE with as much information as possible as outlined in the Standard Reporting Form.
- The DLP should have written notes with them when making the report so what is said on the telephone is reflected in the formal written report
- The DLP should inform the School Manager that such a report is being made. The level of information given is to be based on the best interest of the child
- The DLP should inform the parents of the child a report has been made unless it puts the child at further risk. The DLP can have the DDLP or another staff member present if support is needed
- If the DLP decides that the concerns of a school employee should not be referred to the HSE she should give a clear statement in writing as to the reasons why action is not being taken.
- If the school employee remains concerned they should be advised that they are free to report to the HSE themselves, using a standard reporting form.

The standard reporting form and an outline of a body is given to each teacher at the September staff meeting and in an induction meeting for those staff members joining in the coming years. DDLP does this.

11. Allegations / Suspicions of School Employees

In situations where an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee, while the most important consideration is the protection of the child, the School Manager has a duty in respect of their employees as well. As employers the School Manager should seek legal advice in such cases as circumstances can vary from one case to another and guidelines cannot address every scenario. If the Manager is absent go to the Principal.

In such cases there are two procedures that should be followed:

1. *The reporting procedure in respect of the allegation*
2. *The procedure for dealing with the employee.*

1. *The Reporting Procedure in respect of the allegation:*

- The DLP will immediately inform the School Manager.
- The DLP will seek a written statement of the allegation from the person/agency making the allegation. Parents/guardians may make a statement on behalf of the child

- The DLP will seek advice from the HSE and will take responsibility for reporting, based on this advice.
- If the DLP, following advice following consultation with the HSE, decides that this matter is not for reporting, s/he must inform the School Manager. They must then inform, in writing, the person or agency making the allegation, of the reasons for this decision. If this person or agency still has concerns, they are free to consult with or report to the relevant HSE or Gardaí on an individual basis. The provisions of the Protection for Persons reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 apply, once they report reasonably and in good faith.
- If the DLP, following consultation with the HSE, decides that this matter is for reporting s/he should inform the School Manager, who should proceed in accordance with the procedures in the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, DES, 2001.
- The DLP/Deputy DLP completes a standard reporting form as comprehensively as is possible.

2. The procedure for dealing with the employee

- When the School Manager becomes aware of an allegation of abuse s/he will always seek legal advice and base his/her response on this advice.
- The School Manager will consider whether there is any risk to pupils' safety. If the School Manager considers that there is a risk – s/he may require the employee to take immediate administrative leave. If unsure the School Manager will consult with the HSE/Gardaí.
- If administrative leave has been invoked, the School Manager will inform the DES. The HSE (in some cases the Gardaí) may also be notified in accordance with legal advice received.
- Once it is deemed necessary by the DLP and School Manager to make a report (after receiving advice from the HSE) the School Manager will convene and inform a meeting of the SCHOOL MANAGER as soon as possible.
- Where the alleged abuse has taken place within the school, or relates to the abuse of pupils of the school, by school employees outside of school time, the SCHOOL MANAGER will investigate the matter. They will convene a further meeting, once the relevant information has been gathered. At this meeting the School Manager will consider in detail:
 - The allegations made and their source
 - The advice given by relevant authorities
 - The written responses of the employee.
- At this meeting also
 - The person/agency who is alleging abuse by the school employee should be offered an opportunity to present his/her case to the School Manager and may be accompanied by another person
 - Parents/guardians may act on behalf of child
 - The employee should also be afforded an opportunity to present his/her case and may also be accompanied.
- The School Manager must deal with the matter sensitively and the employee must be fairly treated.
- The School Manager will make a decision on action, if any, based on their investigation and will inform the employee of this in writing. They will also inform the DES of the outcome, if the employee has been absent on administrative leave.



- Where it is not possible for the School Manager to conduct an enquiry into allegations (e.g. where abuse has occurred in past employment, or where the employee is undergoing investigation by relevant authorities), the School Manager will act on advice of authorities. The School Manager will maintain close contact with the HSE and receive reports and records from them where appropriate.

12. Child Protection Meetings/Case Conferences

- A request is made from the HSE through the DLP who should consult with the School Manager. The School Manager may seek clarification through the DLP as to why the attendance of the school employee is necessary and ascertain who else will be present.
- The school employee may complete a report for the meeting/conference. (See Appendix 3, Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, DES).
- The school employee will be advised if children/parents/guardians are going to be present. The school employee may contact the School Manager of the Child Protection Meeting for advice.
- The school employee may keep a child's behaviour under closer observation, if requested to do so. This may include observing the child's behaviour, peer interactions, school progress or informal conversations.
- In all cases, individuals who refer or discuss their concerns about the care and protection of children with HSE staff should be informed of the likely steps to be taken by the professionals involved. Where appropriate and within the normal limits of confidentiality, reporting staff will be kept informed about the outcomes of any enquiry or investigation following on from their report
- Teachers attending a child protection meeting/case conference should familiarise themselves with the protocol outlined on pgs. 149 – 155 of Children First Guidelines, 1999; pgs. 13-14 Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, DES.

13. Intellectual Difficulties

Specific issues may arise in the presentation and assessment of a child with learning difficulties. They may include:

- Communication- some children may have limited verbal skills and other methods of communication may be needed, such as drawing.
- Level of Understanding- It is important to take into account a child's level of understanding when explaining the assessment process and when seeking explanations of events.
- Time- some children may have difficulty with the time scale and recall of events. Children with intellectual difficulties may have a short concentration span and it is important to have regular intervals during interviews.

It is particularly important for children with learning difficulties to have someone present who knows the child during all stages of the process.



14. Ethnicity and Culture

We recognize and celebrate cultural and ethnic diversity. Our child protection policy applies equally to all pupils, parents and staff.

15. Success Criteria

We will evaluate the success of this policy using the following criteria:

- Every member of our school community will be aware of and follow our child protection procedures
- Delivery and participation by all staff in training
- Delivery of the SPHE curriculum
- Resources to support the delivery of SPHE
- Delivery and participation by children in the Stay Safe Programme
- Assessment of these procedures by participants following a child protection case
- Feedback from all staff

16. Timeframe for Implementation

These procedures will be implemented following ratification by the School Manager.

17. Monitoring / Evaluation / Review

At the first staff meeting of every year the DDLP will initiate a review of the Children First Guidelines and Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, DES.

A review will be conducted based on the criteria above, following any and all incidents when the guidelines are used.

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the School Manager on an annual basis and when the need arises. The School Manager will ensure that adequate training and support is provided for all staff.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

School Manager