



## Child Protection Policy

This document is formulated in response to recent changes in Guidance and Procedures in relation to Child Protection matters and takes account of the provisions of each of the following important pieces of legislation:

- Freedom of Information Act 1997
- The Education Act 1998
- The Child Welfare Act 2000
- Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011.

The new procedures are based on the recently published *Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011*.

### References

- 'Children First' (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2011)
- 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (Department of Education and Skills 2011)

The School Manager recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and must be reflected in each school policy, school 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 School Manager has approved this Child Protection Policy.

The School Manager has adopted and will fully implement without modification the Department of Education and Skills Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2011. These procedures will therefore underpin the content of this policy.

The following key personnel have been identified and ratified by the BoM:

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Darragh Roe.

The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Emer Kavanagh.

In its policies, practices and activities, Ard Rí Community National School will adhere to the following principles of best practice in Child Protection and Welfare. Our school recognises that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations and will therefore;

- 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 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
- Fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters
- Adhere to the above principles in relation to any adult pupil with a special vulnerability



Specific policies named hereunder are key elements of this overall document and must be referred to in the context of this policy:

- Attendance
- Enrolment
- Code of Behaviour
- Bullying
- Health & Safety
- Record Keeping
- ICT
- Supervision
- Special Ed
- Induction of Staff
- Tours/Trips
- Critical Incidents

This policy will also be considered with reference to the participation by pupils in sporting activities, other extra-curricular activities and school outings. Other practices and activities, where child protection might have particular relevance, will consider the procedures outlined within this policy. The Manager has ensured that the necessary policies, protocols or practices as appropriate are in place in respect of each of the above listed items.

This policy is available to all school personnel and the Parent Association and is readily accessible to parents on request. It is also available in hard copy in each classroom. A copy of this policy is available for the attention of the DES and the patron if requested.

#### **Designated Liaison Person (DLP)**

In Ard Rí Community National School, the Principal, Darragh Roe, appointed by the School Manager, is the DLP. Emer Kavanagh acts as Deputy DLP. Darragh received his DLP training at Navan Education Centre on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2015. Emer will undertake training from the Child Abuse Prevention Programme at the earliest opportunity. **CAPP** provides training to the whole school community (staff, parents and Boards of Management) on the stay Safe Programme.

The DLP has specific responsibility for Child Protection Procedures and will represent the school in all correspondence with Health Boards, An Garda Síochána and other parties in connection with allegations of abuse. All matters pertaining to child abuse concerns should be processed through the DLP (DES Procedures 3:2)

The DLP acts appropriately where there are reasonable grounds for suspicion or where an allegation has been made.

#### **Confidentiality**

All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse should only be shared on a 'need to know' basis in the interests of the child. The giving of information to those who need to have that information is not a breach of confidentiality. This procedure exists for the protection of a child who may have been or has been abused. The DLP who is submitting a report to the Health Board or An Garda Síochána should inform a parent/guardian, unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or place that child at further risk. A decision not to inform a parent/guardian should be briefly recorded together with the reasons for not doing so.

In emergency situations, where the Health Board cannot be contacted, and the child appears to be at immediate and serious risk, An Garda Síochána should be contacted. A





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child should not be left in a dangerous situation where Health Board intervention is not forthcoming.

### **Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse**

The protection for persons reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to any person who reports a child protection concern 'reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of Health Boards or any member of an Garda Síochána (DES Procedures 1:10)

### **Qualified Privilege**

People making a report to the DLP in good faith have 'qualified privilege' under common law. Reports made to Health Boards may be subject to provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, 1997. This act enables members of the public to obtain access to personal information relating to them which is in the possession of public bodies. However, the act also provides that public bodies may refuse access to information obtained by them in confidence (DES Procedures 1:11)

### **Definition and Recognition of Child Abuse**

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types:

- Neglect
- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse

Each of these categories is defined in full in 'Children First' (Dept. of Children & Youth Affairs Chapter 2).

**Neglect** can be defined in terms of an *omission*, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, medical care.

### **Guidelines for Recognition of Child Abuse**

A list of child neglect indicators is contained in Chapter 2:2 of Children First. This policy draws particular attention to 'persistent evidence' of neglect, including indicators such as no lunch, lack of uniform, no homework, poor attendance, persistent health problems, lack of sleep indicating inappropriate television viewing late at night and other evidence that would indicate lack of supervision in the home. 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:

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

Each of these stages is developed in 'Children First' (2:2)

### **Handling Disclosures from Children**

(DES Procedures 3:5) gives comprehensive details of how disclosures should be approached. Staffs are advised to deal with each situation sensitively, reassure the child but not to make promises that cannot be fulfilled.

The adult should not ask leading questions or make suggestions. They should explain that further help may have to be sought. The discussion should then be recorded accurately.



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The record should include reference to what was observed with sketches of physical injury where necessary. It should also record when the alleged incident took place. Records should be kept in a secure place. The information should then be conveyed to the school DLP.

If the reporting person and the DLP are satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion/allegation, the procedures outlined in 'Children First' must be adhered to. Standardised reporting forms should be used (DES Procedures Appendix 4). The content of the report should follow the guidelines in 'Children First'.

### **Allegations or Suspicions in relation to School Employees (DES Procedures Chapter 5)**

The Chairperson and the DLP are concerned with the protection of the children in their care in the first instance. However, employees must be protected against false and malicious claims. Due process must be observed in relation to allegations against employees. Legal Advice should be sought by the School Manager in relation to an allegation in relation to an employee. If the allegation is against the DLP, the School Manager will assume the responsibility for reporting the matter to the Health Board.

### **Reporting**

When an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee, the DLP should act in accordance with the procedures outlined in Children First. A written statement of the allegation should be sought from the person/agency making the report. A parent/guardian may make a statement on behalf of a child. The DLP should always inform the School Manager and is responsible for liaising with the HSE. The Chairperson assumes responsibility for dealing with the employee.

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 with the DLP.

The employee should be informed by the Manager (Employer) that:

- a. An allegation has been made against him/her
- b. The nature of the allegation
- c. Whether or not the Health Board or Gardaí has been informed.

The employee should be given a copy of the written allegation and any other relevant documentation. The employee should be requested to respond to the allegation in writing to the School Manager within a specified period and told that this may be passed to the Gardaí, Health Board and legal advisers.

The School Manager must take the necessary steps to protect the child. The School Manager may direct that the employee take administrative leave with pay and avoid suspension, thus removing any implication of guilt. The DES should be immediately informed.

### **School Measures Taken to Protect the Children in Our Care**

There are a number of areas where common sense in our school should prevail in order to protect the children in the school and the staff who care for them. In relation to this, certain points should be noted:

1. Ard Rí Community National School shall fully implement the Stay Safe programme
2. A copy of the school's child protection policy, which includes the names of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Deputy DLP, will be made available to all school personnel and the Parents' Association and is readily accessible to parents on request





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3. The name of the DLP and other relevant support services are displayed in a prominent position near the main entrance to the school

4. In addition to informing the school authority of those cases where a report involving a child in the school has been submitted to the HSE, the DLP shall also inform the school authority of cases where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report was made. At each management meeting, the Principal's Report shall include the number of all such cases and this shall be recorded in the minutes of the BOM meeting.

5. Ard Rí Community National School will undertake an annual review of its Child Protection Policy and its implementation by the school. A checklist, to be used in undertaking the review (included at **Appendix 1**). The school has put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement which might be identified in the annual review. The Board of Management shall make arrangements to inform school personnel that the review has been undertaken. Written notification that the review has been undertaken shall be provided to the Parent Association. A record of the review and its outcome shall be made available, if requested, to the patron and the DES.

- Staff who take classes swimming should make sure that there are two adults in attendance at all times. The dressing rooms and pool area should be well supervised. All adults present should be familiar with the school Swimming Policy
- Staff should make every effort not be alone in a classroom with one child or detain a child on their own after school. In the case of special needs pupils where resource hours and assistance are sanctioned on an individual basis, it is school policy that staff in such a situation should work with the classroom door open, thus rendering the occupants visible at all times.
- When possible children should work in groups
- Children with physical disabilities who may require assistance in toileting will be aided by a Special Needs Assistant who has met the necessary screening requirements when being employed by the school.

It should be noted that children with disabilities may be more at risk of abuse due to a number of reasons (DES Procedures 2:3). Parents, teachers and all staff involved in services for children with disabilities need to be familiar with the indicators of abuse and to be alert for signs of abuse.



## Appendix 1: Checklist for Annual Review of the Child Protection Policy

The School Manager must undertake an annual review of its Child Protection Policy and the following checklist shall be used for this purpose.

The checklist is designed as an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. The School Manager may wish to include other items in the checklist that are of particular relevance to Ard Rí Community National School and reserves the right to do so if/when the need occurs.

1.	As part of the overall review process, the school manager should also assess other school policies, practices and activities vis a vis their adherence to the principles of best practice in child protection and welfare as set out in the school's Child Protection policy	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO
2.	Has the manager formally adopted a child protection policy in accordance with the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO
3.	As part of the school's child protection policy, has the manager formally adopted, without modification, the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO
4.	Are there both a DLP and a Deputy DLP currently appointed?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO
5.	Are the relevant contact details (HSE and An Garda Síochána) to hand?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO
6.	Has the DLP attended available child protection training?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO
7.	Has the Deputy DLP attended available child protection training?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	<input checked="" type="radio"/> NO
8.	Have any members of the Board attended child protection training?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO
9.	Has the school's child protection policy identified other school policies, practices and activities that are regarded as having particular child protection relevance?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO
10.	Has the manager ensured that the Department's 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools' are available to all school personnel?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO
11.	Does the manager have arrangements in place to communicate the school's child protection policy to new school personnel?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO
12.	Is the manager satisfied that all school personnel have been made aware of their responsibilities under the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO
13.	Since the manager's last annual review, was the Board informed of any child protection reports made to the HSE/An Garda Síochána by the DLP?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO
14.	Since the manager's last annual review, was the Board informed of any cases where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report to the HSE was made?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO
15.	Is the manager satisfied that the child protection procedures in relation to the making of reports to the HSE/ An Garda Síochána were appropriately followed?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO
16.	Were child protection matters reported to the manager appropriately recorded in the management meeting minutes?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO
17.	Is the manager satisfied that all records relating to child protection are appropriately filed and stored securely?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO
18.	Has the manager ensured that the Parents' Association has been provided with the school's child protection policy?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO

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**Ratification of Policy**



This policy will be reviewed by the School Management once in every school year.

This policy was adopted by the School Manager on September 15

Signed: [Signature]  
Single School Manager

Date: 21 Sept 15

Signed: [Signature]  
Principal

Date: 21 Sept 15

Date of next review: June 2016

The Board further endorses the Principal, Darragh Roe as the school DLP and Deputy Principal Emer Kavanagh as Deputy DLP.

On behalf of the Board of Management:

[Signature] (Manager) Date: 11/4/16