

St Joseph's NS
Hacketstown,
Co. Carlow
059 – 6471199
Roll No: 17127S
htownns@gmail.com



Child Protection Policy

Introductory Statement

The staff and management of St. Joseph's National School have formally adopted and agreed this policy to implement the *DES 2011 Child Protection Procedures* and the *HSE Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011* without modification.

Aims

This policy aims to

1. Create a safe, trusting, responsive and caring environment
2. Promote each child's well-being and safeguard him/her from harm while in the school
3. Provide a personal safety skills education which specifically addresses abuse prevention for all children in the school
4. Develop awareness and responsibility in the area of child protection amongst the whole school community
5. Put in place procedures for good practice to protect all children and staff
6. Ensure that all staff members are aware of and familiar with the 'Children First' and the DES guidelines and procedures in relation to reporting concerns and/or disclosures of child abuse
7. Provide for ongoing training in this and related areas for all school staff

Prevention

The Stay Safe programme is being fully implemented in this school to provide education for children on abuse prevention. Both the Stay Safe and R.S.E. programmes are taught as part of the school's SPHE curriculum under the strand unit Safety and Protection.

Procedures:

All staff (Teachers, SNAs, ancillary, secretarial, caretaking etc.) in this school will adopt and implement without modification the Department of Education and Science document, 'Children First' – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011.

Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

The Principal, Doireann Hester, will act as DLP. The Deputy Principal, Barry Murphy, will act as DDLP. The DLP has specific responsibility for child protection and will represent the school in all dealings with Health Boards, An Garda Síochána and other parties in connection with allegations of abuse. All matters pertaining to the processing or investigation of child abuse should be processed through the DLP.

In its policies, practices and activities, the staff and management of St. Joseph's National School will adhere to the following principles of best practice in child protection and welfare:

The school will

- Recognize 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 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.
- All concerns/disclosures 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.

Guidelines for Recognition of Child Abuse

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: -

- Considering the possibility
- Looking out for signs of abuse
- Recording of information

Handling Disclosures from Children

When information is offered in confidence the member of staff will need to act with sensitivity in responding to the disclosure. The member of staff will need to reassure the child, and retain his/her trust, while explaining the need for action and the 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 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
- 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.

This information should then be passed onto the DLP and a record will be retained in the school.

If the reporting person or member of the school staff and the DLP is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion/allegation, the procedures for reporting as laid out in 'Children First' – Section 4.4 pg. 38(Appendix 10), will be adhered to.

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 to 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 Síochána unless doing so is likely to endanger the child.

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

Practice:

The following areas have been considered by the staff and board of management of this school as areas of specific concern in relation to child protection. Following discussion and consultation the staff and board of management have agreed that the following practices be adopted.

a. 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:-

1. It is acceptable to the child
2. It is open and not secretive
3. The age and developmental stage of the child

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

b. Visitors/Guest Speakers:

Visitors/guest speakers should never be left alone with pupils. 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.

c. 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 the particular staff involved, are absent. A written copy of what has been agreed will be made and kept in the child's file.

d. 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 parent/guardians cannot be contacted the child will be assisted by members of staff familiar to the child.

e. One-to-one teaching

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. 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.

f. Changing for Games/PE/Swimming

Pupils will be expected to dress and undress themselves for Games/PE/Swimming. This will be done in communal areas. At all times there must be adequate supervision of pupils. In circumstances where members of staff may need to assist in dressing/undressing a child in a cubicle/private area, a written permission/request form must be completed by a parent in advance. See appendix 3.

Allegations Against School Employees

The most important consideration for the Chairperson, Board of Management or the DLP is the safety and protection of the child. However, employees 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.

There are two procedures to be followed:

- i. The reporting Procedure
- ii. The Procedure for dealing with the Employee.

The DLP has responsibility for reporting the matter to the Health Board. The Chairperson, Board of Management has responsibility, acting in consultation with his/her Board, for addressing the employment issues. If the allegation is against the DLP, the Chairperson of the Board of Management 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 immediately act in accordance with the procedures outlined in “Child Protection.”

A written statement of the allegation should be sought from the person/agency making the report. The DLP should always inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

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 procedures outlined will then be followed.

The chairperson of the Board and DLP should make the employee aware privately

- a) That 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/will be/must be/should be 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 Board of Management within a specified period and told that this may be passed to the Gardaí, Health Board, and legal advisers.

The priority in all cases is that no child be exposed to unnecessary risk. Therefore, as a matter of urgency, the Chairperson should take any necessary protective measures. These measure should be proportionate to the level of risk and should not unreasonably penalise the employee in any way unless to protect the child.

If the nature of the allegations warrant immediate action in the Chairperson's opinion, the Board of Management should be convened to consider the matter. The Board will consider feedback if any has been received from the Health Board, Gardai or relevant source. This may result in the Board of Management directing that the employee absent him/herself from the school forthwith while the matter is being investigated (Administrative Leave). When the Board of Management is unsure as to whether this should occur, advice should be sought from the Gardaí and/or the Child Care Manager of the Health Board and the legal advisers to the Board of Management.

Administrative Leave

Should the Board of Management direct that the employee absent him/herself as above, such absence of the employee would be regarded as administrative leave of absence with pay and not suspension and would not imply any degree of guilt. The DES should be immediately informed.

Board of Management

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.

Links to other policy/planning areas:

Prevention: SPHE curriculum, Strand Unit on 'Safety and Protection'
The School Code of Behaviour

Procedures: Anti-Bullying Policy
Health and Safety Statement

Practice: Swimming Policy
School Tours/Outings

Contact Details: HSE and Guards

HSE: 076-1082000
Guards: 059-6481022

Child Protection Books in secretary’s office:

1. *HSE Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011*
2. *Des 2011 Child Protection Procedures*

Vetting: The Board of Management has decided to roll out vetting for personnel who may have access to school children in accordance with circular 63/2010 DES.

Review

All members of staff have been issued with a copy of this policy and have signed that they have received and read same.

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

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management in March 2020.

Signed: _____
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: _____
Principal

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date of next review: _____

All school personnel will view and sign the Child Protection Policy on our online management system.

Appendix 1

*St Joseph's NS
Hacketstown,
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059 – 6471199
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Checklist for Annual Review of the Child Protection Policy

The Board of Management must undertake an annual review of its child protection policy and the following checklist shall be used for this purpose.

As part of the overall review process, Boards of Management 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.

	Yes/No
Has the Board formally adopted a child protection policy in accordance with the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	Yes
As part of the school's child protection policy, has the Board formally adopted, without modification, the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	Yes
Are there both a DLP and a Deputy DLP currently appointed?	Yes
Are the relevant contact details (HSE and An Garda Síochána) to hand?	Yes
Has the DLP attended available child protection training?	Yes: 14/1/21
Has the Deputy DLP attended available child protection training?	Yes 14/1/21
Have any members of the Board attended child protection training?	
Has the school's child protection policy identified other school policies, practices and activities that are regarded as having particular child protection relevance?	Yes
Has the Board ensured that the Department's "Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools" are available to all school personnel?	Yes Copies in staff info folders
Has the Board arrangements in place to communicate the school's child protection policy to new school personnel?	Yes
Is the Board satisfied that all school personnel have been made aware of their responsibilities under the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	Yes
Since the Board's last annual review, was the Board informed of any child protection reports made to the HSE/An Garda Síochána by the DLP?	Yes
Since the Board'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?	Yes
Is the Board satisfied that the child protection procedures in relation to the making of reports to the HSE/ An Garda Síochána were appropriately followed?	Yes

Were child protection matters reported to the Board appropriately recorded in the Board minutes?	System changed to reflect best practice following CPSI
Is the Board satisfied that all records relating to child protection are appropriately filed and stored securely?	System changed to reflect best practice following CPSI
Has the Board ensured that the Parents' Association (if any), has been provided with the school's child protection policy?	Yes

	Yes/No
Has the Board ensured that the school's child protection policy is available to parents on request?	Yes
Has the Board ensured that the Stay Safe programme is implemented in full in the school? (applies to primary schools)	Yes
Has the Board ensured that the SPHE curriculum is implemented in full in the school?	Yes
Is the Board satisfied that the Department's requirements for Garda Vetting have been met in respect of all school personnel (employees and volunteers)? *	Yes
Is the Board satisfied that the Department's requirements in relation to the provision of a child protection related statutory declaration and associated form of undertaking have been met in respect of persons appointed to teaching and non-teaching positions?*	Yes
Is the Board satisfied that, from a child protection perspective, thorough recruitment and selection procedures are applied by the school in relation to all school personnel (employees and volunteers)?*	Yes
Is the Board satisfied that the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools' are being fully and adequately implemented by the school?	Yes
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's child protection policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	No
Has the Board put in place an action plan containing appropriate timelines to address those aspects of the school's child protection policy and/or its implementation that have been identified as requiring further improvement ?	N/A
Has the Board ensured that any areas for improvement that that were identified in any previous review of the school's child protection policy have been adequately addressed?	N/A

*In schools where the VEC is the employer the responsibility for meeting these requirements rests with the VEC concerned. In such cases, this question should be completed following consultation with the VEC.

Signed _____ Date _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____ Date _____
Principal

Appendix 2

*St Joseph's NS
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Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the child protection policy

To: _____

The Board of Management of _____ wishes to inform you that:

- The Board of Management's annual review of the school's child protection policy was completed at the Board meeting of _____ [date].
- This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in Appendix 2 of the Department's 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'

Signed _____ Date _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____ Date _____
Principal

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Assistance with dressing

I request that the following designated adults will assist my child to dress in a cubicle / private area in _____ (location).

Child's name: _____

Designated adults: _____

In the case that this adult is not available, I ask that they elect another adult to do the same in their place.

Start date: _____

Signed: _____ (Parent's signature)

Date: _____

