



Child Protection Policy

March 2017

Ennis National School

Child Protection Policy

ENNIS NATIONAL SCHOOL

1. INTRODUCTION

The Board of Management of Ennis National School value and encourage the participation of pupils in all activities that enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development. Ennis National School recognises the dignity and rights of all pupils and is committed to ensuring their protection and support. Management, staff and volunteers accept and recognise our responsibilities both to develop awareness of the practices that cause children harm and to create an environment that safeguards the well being of all the children that attend the school.

The Child Protection Policy of Ennis National School has been developed in accordance with:

- Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, Department of Education & Skills, 2011.
- Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2011.
- Circular 65/2011

Queries about Child Protection Procedures in our school should be directed to:

- Chairman of the Board of Management: Mr. Thomas Murray

Allegations or suspicions of child abuse should be brought to the attention of the Chairperson of the Board of Management, the Designated Liaison Person (DLP), or the relevant authorities.

- Mr. Thomas Murray, Chairperson of the Board of Management, Ennis, N.S.
- Mrs Anne McMahon, School Designated Liaison Person, 065 6829158
- Mr Ray McInerney, School Deputy Designated Liaison Person, 065 6829158
- Garda Denis Collins, Ennis Garda Station, 065 - 6848100
- Local HSE office: Duty Social Care Worker 065 – 6863965

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Child Abuse: Towards a Definition

Ennis National School has adopted the definition of child abuse as described in the 'Children First Guidelines'.

The 'Children First Guidelines', defines child abuse by using 4 categories: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. It should be noted that a child might be subject to more than one form of abuse at any given time.

Neglect

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, medical care or attachment to and affection from adults. The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that their well-being and/or development are severely affected.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is normally found in the relationship between a care-giver (an adult person who has responsibility for a child in the short or long term) and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's needs for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. It is rarely manifested in terms of physical symptoms. Children show signs of emotional abuse by their behaviour (for example excessive clinginess to or avoidance of the parent or carer), their emotional state (low self-esteem, unhappiness) or their development. The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and parent or carer.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or any injury that results from willful or neglectful failure to protect a child. Examples of physical injury include:

- shaking,
- use of excessive force in handling,
- deliberate poisoning,
- suffocation,
- Munchausen's Syndrome by proxy (where parents make up stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness), or
- allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for their gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others. Examples of sexual abuse include:

- exposing sexual organs or intentionally performing any sexual act in the presence of a child,
- intentional touching or molesting the body of a child, by a person or object, for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification,
- masturbating in the presence of a child or involving the child in the act of masturbation,
- engaging in sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal,
- sexually exploiting a child, or
- consensual sexual activity between an adult and a child under 17 years.

(In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that, for the purposes of criminal law, the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years).

Aggressive/Bullying/Sexualised Behaviour:

While bullying is not a category in itself, it is important to be aware of it in relation to child abuse. Bullying can be defined as repeated verbal, psychological or physical aggression that is conducted by an individual or group against others. It includes behaviour such as teasing, taunting, threatening and hitting.

- In Ennis National School, peer to peer bullying as described above will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Anti Bullying Policy (2014).
- Bullying behaviour that is perpetrated by an adult against a child will be dealt with under the provisions of this policy.

Sexualised behaviour displayed by an individual child, or occurring between children is inappropriate. Should such behaviour occur, the school:

- will arrange meetings (separate meetings if there are children from more than one family implicated) with the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the child/children involved.
- may, if deemed appropriate, seek advice from the HSE.

In a situation where child abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another child, the child protection procedures will be adhered to for the victim and the alleged abuser; that is, the matter will be considered a childcare and protection issue for both children.

2.2 Responsibility to Report Suspected or Actual Abuse

Any person who suspects that a child is being abused or is at risk of abuse, has a responsibility and a duty of care to report their concerns to the Health Service Executive or an Garda Síochána, either directly or through the Designated Liaison Person.

The Protection for *Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998* provides immunity from civil liability to people who report child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to the HSE or the Gardaí.

Persons furnishing information with regard to suspicions of child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to the DLP or Chairperson of the Board of Management are protected under '*Qualified Privilege*' as defined by Common Law.

It is a criminal offence to make a report of child abuse 'knowing the statement to be false'.

2.3 The Health Service Executive

The HSE has a range of statutory responsibilities in the area of child welfare, family support, child protection and childcare.

Once an allegation of child abuse has been reported to the HSE, it is then a matter for the HSE to decide upon the action, if any, which is necessitated by that report.

In the case of allegations or suspicions of child abuse by school employees the *Children First* guidelines place an onus on the HSE to ensure that arrangements are put in place to provide feedback to the Board of Management in regard to the progress of a child abuse investigation regarding an employee. It is clearly stated in those guidelines that efforts should be made to investigate complaints against employees promptly bearing in mind the serious implications for an innocent employee. The HSE is required to pass on reports and records to the Board of Management and the employee in question where appropriate. The Board of Management should always be notified of the outcome of investigations. It is the responsibility of the Chairperson of the Board of Management to maintain close contact with the health boards to ensure that the health boards act promptly in cases of alleged abuse involving school employees.

3. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 The Board of Management

The Board of Management of Ennis National School acknowledges its responsibilities in respect of child protection to include the following:

- Primary responsibility for the care and welfare of pupils.
- The development and implementation of an effective child protection policy.
- The appointment of a DLP and deputy DLP.
- The review and evaluation of the child protection policy and associated procedures.
- The provision of appropriate staff development and training.
- To monitor the progress of children at risk.
- The Investigation of allegations of child abuse against one of the school's employees that have been reported to the Health Service Executive (HSE) or An Garda Síochána.
- To ensure that curriculum provision aimed at the prevention of child abuse is in place.
- The development of a policy on teachers' attendance at child protection meetings/case conferences and the provision of advice to teachers before attending such meetings/conferences.

3.2 School Staff & Volunteers

- All staff have a general duty of care to ensure that arrangements are in place to protect children from harm.
- Staff are responsible for adhering to the child protection procedures as detailed in the school's child protection policy.
- Teaching staff are responsible for the delivery of the curriculum aimed at the prevention of child abuse.
- Staff and volunteers are expected to comply with the child protection Code of Good Practice as detailed in Section 4.1 of this document.
- All school personnel are especially well placed to observe changes in behaviour, failure to develop or outward signs of abuse in children. In situations where school staff or volunteers suspect abuse or have concerns regarding the welfare of a child they are required to act in accordance with the procedures detailed in this document.

3.3 Role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

- The Designated Liaison Person has specific responsibility for child protection.
- The DLP is the first point of contact within the school regarding suspicions or disclosures of abuse.
- This person is the Designated Liaison Person for the school in all dealings with the HSE, An Garda Síochána and other parties, in connection with allegations of abuse.
- In instances where there are reasonable grounds for a suspicion or allegation of child abuse the DLP is responsible for reporting the matter to the HSE, or in the case of an emergency the Garda Síochána.
- The DLP is responsible for informing the Chairperson of the Board of Management if a report involving a pupil in the school has been submitted to the HSE or Garda Síochána.
- The Designated Liaison Person of Ennis National School is Ann McMahon Tel: 0656829158

3.4 Role of the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLDP)

- The Deputy Designated Liaison Person is responsible for performing the DLP's responsibilities if *he/she* is unavailable or in *his/her* absence.
- The DDPL of Ennis National School is Mr Ray McNerney, Tel: 065-6829158

4. CHILD PROTECTION: CREATING A SAFE & SECURE ENVIRONMENT

4.1 Code of Good Practice for BoM members, Staff & Volunteers

For the purposes of the Code of Good Practice the term personnel describes anyone who engages with pupils of the school during the school day (including school activities organised outside of school hours or off the school premises), whether as a paid employee or as a volunteer.

General Conduct

- Physical punishment of pupils is not permissible under any circumstances.
- Verbal abuse of pupils, the use of sexual innuendo or telling jokes of a sexual nature in the presence of pupils is never acceptable. Great care should be taken if it is necessary to have a conversation regarding sexual matters with a pupil.
- Generally speaking, being alone with a pupil is not recommended. If it is necessary to be alone with a pupil, it is important that both adult and pupil are visible to other pupils or adults.
- All pupils must be treated with equal respect; favouritism is not acceptable.
- Personnel should not engage in or tolerate any behaviour – verbal, psychological or physical – that could be construed as bullying or abusive.
- A disproportionate amount of time should not be spent with any particular pupil or group of pupils.
- Under no circumstances should school personnel give alcohol, tobacco or drugs to pupils.

Respect for Physical Integrity

- The physical integrity of pupils must be respected at all times.
- Personnel must not engage in inappropriate physical contact of any kind – including tough physical play, physical reprimand and any form of horseplay. This should not prevent appropriate contact in situations where it is necessary to ensure the safety and well being of a pupil (for example, where a pupil is distressed).

Respect for Privacy

- The right to privacy of pupils must be respected at all times.
- Particular care regarding privacy must be taken when pupils are in locations such as changing areas, swimming pools, showers and toilets.
- Photographs of pupils must never be taken while they are in changing areas (for example, in a locker room or bathing facility) or toilets.
- Tasks of a personal nature (for example, helping with toileting, washing or changing clothing) should not be done for pupils if they can undertake these tasks themselves. If essential to undertake tasks of a personal nature then two staff members should be present. If a pupil needs assistance on an ongoing basis with tasks of a personal nature, an Intimate Care Needs Plan should be devised in consultation with the pupil's parents which takes Child Protection guidelines into consideration.

Meetings with Pupils

- If it is necessary to meet alone with a pupil, such meetings should, where possible, be held in an open environment. The times and designated locations for meetings should allow for transparency and accountability. Both the length and number of meetings should be limited.
- When the need for a visit to the home of a pupil or young person arises, professional boundaries must be observed at all times.

Pupils with Special Needs or Disability

- Pupils with special needs or disability may depend on adults more than other pupils for their care and safety, and so sensitivity and clear communication are particularly important
- Where it is necessary to carry out tasks of a personal nature for a pupil with special needs, this should be done with the full understanding and consent of parents or guardians.
- In carrying out such personal care tasks, sensitivity must be shown to the pupil and the tasks should be undertaken with the utmost discretion.
- Personnel should not undertake any care task of a personal nature that a pupil or young person can do for themselves.
- In an emergency situation where this type of help is required, parents should be fully informed as soon as is reasonably possible.

Vulnerable Pupils

- As especially vulnerable pupils may depend on adults more than other children for their care and safety, sensitivity and clear communication are of utmost importance.
- Vulnerable pupils may be more likely than other pupils to be bullied or subjected to other forms of abuse, and may also be less clear about physical and emotional boundaries.
- It is particularly important that vulnerable pupils should be carefully listened to, in recognition of the fact that they may have difficulty in expressing their concerns and in order that the importance of what they say is not underestimated.

Handling Disclosures from Pupils

Personnel dealing with disclosures from pupils should act with tact and sensitivity. In particular personnel who find themselves in such a situation should:

- Listen to the pupil
- Not ask leading questions or make suggestions to the pupil
- Offer reassurance but not make promises (e.g. promising not to tell anyone else)
- Not stop a pupil recalling significant events
- Not over react
- Explain that further help may have to be sought
- Record the conversation accurately and retain the record
- Report the matter to the DLP (or to the Chairperson of the BoM if the DLP is implicated)

See Appendix 1 on Child Protection Guidelines Checklist for School Employees for further information

Maintaining Records

When child abuse is suspected, it is essential to have a record of all the information available. Personnel should note carefully what they have observed and when they observed it. Signs of

physical injury should be described in detail and, if appropriate, sketched.

Any comment by the child concerned, or by any other person, about how an injury occurred should be recorded, preferably quoting words actually used, as soon as possible after the comment has been made. All records so created should be regarded as highly confidential and retained in a secure location by the Designated Liaison Person.

4.2 Vetting of New Employees

The Board of Management undertakes that-

- Requirements of Circular 31/2016 in relation to vetting will be fulfilled
- A Garda Vetting Report is requested in respect of all new appointees whether permanent or for a fixed term.
- Reference checks will be carried out in respect of all new appointees.

4.3 Induction of New Employees

- All new employees will be given a copy of this policy.
- The DLP will be responsible for providing all new staff with a copy of this policy document and discussing their obligations with regard to it.
- All new teachers are expected to teach the designated SPHE objectives for their class.

4.4 Supervision

- There is comprehensive supervision of pupils throughout the school day. A roster of staff on duty will be displayed in the office/staff room and on Aladdin.
- Teachers will ensure that pupils are visible in the schoolyard.
- Pupils will not be permitted to leave the schoolyard or engage with adults outside of the schoolyard.
- Pupils will not be allowed to enter the school during break time without permission from the supervising teacher.
- Pupils who have to remain indoors at break time will be accommodated in the hallway adjacent to the staffroom (or in a designated supervised room).
- Pupils are not allowed to leave the school premises during school time unless they are being collected by a parent/guardian.
- Unauthorised persons coming onto school grounds during breaktime should be approached by the adult on supervision duty and directed as appropriate. People who have no reason to be on school property should be advised to leave the school in the interests of the safety of the pupils.

4.5 One-to-One Teaching

Where one-to-one teaching is deemed to be in the best interest of a pupil, teachers will endeavour to ensure visibility by leaving the door open or teaching in a high visibility location within the room. It is also advisable that arrangements be made with other staff to visit the room on an adhoc basis. It is recognised that at times it may be necessary for a one to one meeting between an adult in charge and a pupil. As a minimum precaution, ensure that the meeting takes place in a high visibility location. Ideally there should be a second adult present.

Staff should avoid being one on one with a child in the toilet areas – if necessary call another member of staff. Where a staff member cannot get assistance from another staff member to help with changing

a pupil or with toileting, this should be recorded on the pupil's file on Aladdin. Where a pupil needs the assistance of a teacher/SNA for toileting, arrangements for toileting should be agreed with the class teacher and the child's parent.

Supervising adults should ensure that groups of pupils don't congregate in toilet areas.

4.6 Attendance

Procedures with regard to the monitoring of school attendance are contained in the school's Attendance Policy.

4.7 Curriculum

The following programmes are used within the S.P.H.E. Curriculum from Junior Infants to Sixth Class to instruct pupils about Child Safety issues:

- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme

4.8 Use of Images of Children

- The school undertakes to ensure that there will be no misuse of pupil images for any publicity purposes.
- Only images of pupils in appropriate dress will be used.
- Inappropriate use of images of pupils will be brought to the attention of the DLP.
- Any external agency or person using images should first seek permission from the school principal.

4.9 Use of Technology

- Procedures with regard to the use of technology are contained in the school's Acceptable Usage Policy.
- Pupils do not use mobile phones during school hours. Should mobile phones be mislaid on the school premises, the school accepts no liability whatsoever.

4.10 School Visitors

All visitors to the school should first report to the School Office.

Visitors working with pupils must discuss and clear the content of their work with the teacher in charge or principal in advance of taking the class.

Class teacher/Teacher in charge must remain with his/her class at all times or in the case of having to leave organises for his/her class to be supervised. The teacher remains responsible for the pupils in their care and therefore class discipline/safety etc. is the responsibility of the class teacher.

Visitors/Guest speakers who have not been vetted should never be left alone with pupils.

The following will be allowed work with a class unsupervised at the Principal's discretion: vetted substitute staff, vetted guest speakers, vetted student teachers/student special needs assistants on work experience.

4.11 Travel

Best practice in relation to travel with pupils will be observed. Personnel should not undertake any car or minibus journey alone with a pupil. If, in certain circumstances, only one adult is available, there should be a minimum of two pupils present for the entire journey. In the event of an emergency, where it is necessary to make a journey alone with a pupil, the school principal, the pupil's parent(s) or guardian(s) will be informed as soon as is possible.

Pupil's behaviour on outings will comply with the standard set down in the school's Code of Behaviour. Because of increased risk to the safety of others and in order to achieve their purpose, the highest standard of behaviour is necessary on school outings. The ratio of pupils to supervising adults should take account of the age and maturity of the pupils involved, and be sufficient to ensure reasonable care for the safety of the pupils. Other teachers and/or parents/guardians may be asked to help with supervision.

For outings that extend beyond normal school hours, it is the responsibility of the teacher in charge to return the children to an agreed location and then it is the parents/guardians responsibility to ensure that arrangements are in place for the child to be collected from the agreed location. The teacher in charge must be informed in advance if the child is to be collected by someone other than the parents/guardian. The teacher in charge should take a tour kit containing first aid materials, mobile phone, pupil contact details etc.

Where a bus is hired for a school or class outing, the teacher in charge should accompany pupils on the bus. Pupils will be subject to the school's Code of Behaviour.

The number of children carried in the car should not be greater than the number of seatbelts available.

Pupils should normally be collected from and dropped back to the school.

4.12 School Tours / Overnight Trips

- All trips, including day trips and overnight stays, will be carefully planned in advance, to include adequate provision for safety in regard to transport, facilities, activities and emergencies. Adequate insurance will be put in place.
- Written consent for school trips involving accommodation should be sought from parents or guardians in advance.
 - A copy of the itinerary and contact telephone numbers will be made available to parents and guardians.
 - There will be adequate, gender-appropriate, supervision for boys and girls.
 - Arrangements and procedures will be put in place to ensure that rules and appropriate boundaries are maintained in the relaxed environment of trips away.
 - Particular attention will be given to ensuring that the privacy of young people is respected when they are away on trips.
 - The provision of appropriate and adequate sleeping arrangements will be ensured in advance of the trip.
 - Sleeping areas for boys and girls will be separate and supervised by adults.

- If, in an emergency situation, an adult considers it necessary to be in a child's dormitory or bedroom without another adult being present they will (a) immediately inform another adult in a position of responsibility as soon as possible.

4.13 Administration of First Aid

There is a basic first aid box in each classroom containing antiseptic wipes and bandages. Comprehensive first aid supplies are located in the cabinet in the staffroom. Within the school, a post-holder has responsibility for first aid, including supplies (currently Aisling Howley). There are a number of staff trained in first aid and also in the use of the defibrillator.

In the event of a playground incident requiring significant first aid, the adult on supervision duty should send pupils to the staffroom for assistance.

The school foyer can be used for the administration of first aid. Details of incident and first aid administered should be recorded on the pupils' file on Aladdin.

4.14 Assembly of Pupils

Parents will be reminded annually that

- the school only accepts responsibility for supervision during school hours
- the yard is not supervised prior to 8.40am

4.15 Changing Arrangements for PE/Games/Swimming

Children should attend school in school tracksuit on schooldays where pupils have PE/Swimming.

When necessary the school dressing room can be used as a changing area if required. Boys and girls should not share changing facilities at the same time.

Adults bringing classes to a swimming pool or who are in charge of school teams should be cognisant of the additional vulnerabilities of being in an enclosed room while children are changing. A supervising presence should be maintained while avoiding spending time in a dressing room with children in a state of undress. A supervising presence can be maintained by keeping dressing room doors ajar, by regularly knocking at the door and by informing pupils in the dressing room that you are entering (eg on the count of 10). Pupils should be regularly informed of the importance of good behaviour in dressing rooms and should be encouraged to tell the supervising adults of any incidents which occur.

- Children will be accompanied to the swimming pool by two supervising adults where possible.
- Supervising adults will ensure that dressing rooms are supervised before and after swimming. If it is inappropriate to enter the dressing room, then supervisor should be available near the door to be of assistance to pupils if required. The supervising adults should avoid spending time in dressing rooms and should recognise that children are vulnerable
- One teacher may supervise the dressing room while the other supervises the children who have finished.
- The last five or six children to finish will be held until all have finished changing to avoid being alone in an enclosed area with one or two pupils.

4.16 Code of Behaviour/Anti-Bullying:

Bullying behaviour will be addressed under our Anti-Bullying policy. If the behaviour involved is of a sexualised nature or regarded as being particularly abusive then the matter will be referred to the DLP. We recognise that bullying can be pupil/pupil; pupil/staff; staff/pupil; parent/staff; staff/parents; staff/staff.

4.17 Other Measures to Protect Children in our care:

- 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 staff.
- The name of the DLP and other relevant support services are displayed in a prominent position near the main entrance to the school.
- In addition to informing the school Board of Management 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 Board of Management of cases where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report was made. At each meeting of the Board of Management the Principal shall inform the Board of the number of all such cases.
- Ennis National School will undertake an annual review of its Child Protection Policy and its implementation by the school.

6. REPORTING CASES OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

6.1 Action to be Taken by School Personnel

- If a school employee receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a pupil is being abused the school employee will, in the first instance, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person.

6.2 Action to be Taken by the Designated Liaison Person

- If the school employee and the Designated Liaison Person are satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation the Designated Liaison Person will report the matter to the HSE immediately.

Reasonable Grounds

The following examples are quoted in *Children First Guidelines* as constituting reasonable grounds for concern:

- Specific information from the child that he/she was abused;
- An account by a person who saw the child being abused;
- Evidence, such as injury or behaviour, which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way;
- An injury or behaviour which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it is a case of abuse e.g. a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour; and
- Consistent evidence, over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

A suspicion, which is not supported by any objective indication of abuse or neglect, would not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern in the first instance.

- The DLP will make every attempt to make personal contact with the duty social worker but in any event such a report will be made to the HSE in writing.
 - In the event of an emergency, or the non-availability of HSE staff, the report will be made to An Garda Síochána.
 - When a report is being made to the HSE or An Garda Síochána, the Chairperson of the Board of Management of the school will be informed.
 - When a report is being made to the HSE or An Garda Síochána, the DLP will inform a parent/guardian unless doing so is likely to endanger the pupil or place the pupil at further risk. A decision not to inform a parent/guardian will be recorded together with the reasons for not doing so.
- In cases where school personnel have concerns about a child, but are not sure whether to report the matter the Designated Liaison Person will consult the appropriate HSE staff. In consulting the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person will clearly state that *he/she* is requesting advice and consultation and that *he/she* is not making a report. If the HSE advises that a referral should be made, the Designated Liaison Person will act on that advice.
- If following consultation with the appropriate HSE staff, the Designated Liaison Person decides that the concerns of the school employee will not be referred, the school employee will be given a clear statement, in writing, as to the reasons why action is not being taken. The school employee will be advised that, if *he/she* remains concerned about the situation, *he/she* is free to consult with or report to the HSE.

7. CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES

A child protection conference is a forum for the co-ordination of information from all relevant sources, including where necessary, school employees. The child protection conference plays a pivotal role in making recommendations and planning for the welfare of children who may be at serious risk.

- A request from the HSE for a school employee to attend a child protection conference should be made to the Designated Liaison Person who will consult with the Chairperson of the Board of Management of the school. The Chairperson of the Board of Management may, through the Designated Liaison Person, request the appropriate authorities to clarify why the attendance of the school employee at the child protection conference is considered necessary, who else is going to be present and if the employee is required to provide a report.
- If there are concerns about the attendance of parents/guardians, the school will contact the conference chairperson for guidance.

- As a result of the CP conference the school employee may be requested to keep the child's behaviour under closer observation, in a manner that is not inconsistent with the school employee's existing duties to his/her class as a whole. 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. Wherever appropriate and within the normal limits of confidentiality, HSE have a responsibility to inform persons reporting alleged child abuse and other involved professionals about the outcomes of any enquiry or investigation into that reported concern.

8. ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF CHILD ABUSE BY SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

The primary concern of the Board of Management of Ennis National School is to protect the pupils attending the school to whom we have a duty of care. However, as an employer, the Board of Management also has responsibilities towards its employees. In this respect and in the event of an allegation of abuse being made against an employee of the school the Board of Management will observe the employees' right not to be judged in advance of a full and fair enquiry.

Should an allegation of abuse be made against a school employee the Board of Management undertakes to seek legal advice in respect of it.

8.1 Reporting Procedure

- School employees, other than the Designated Liaison Person, who receive allegations of abuse against another school employee, will report the matter without delay to the Designated Liaison Person (or Chairperson of the Board of Management if appropriate).
- School employees who form suspicions regarding the conduct of another school employee will consult with the Designated Liaison Person (or Chairperson of the Board of Management if appropriate).
- Where an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee, the Designated Liaison Person within the school will immediately act in accordance with the procedures outlined in Section 6.2 of this policy. A written statement of the allegation will be sought from the person/agency making the allegation (parents/guardians may make a statement on behalf of the child).
- Whether or not the matter is being reported to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management of the allegation.
- Where the allegation of abuse is against the Designated Liaison Person, the Chairperson of the Board of Management will assume responsibility for reporting the matter to the HSE or An Garda Síochána.

8.2 Action to be taken by the Chairperson of the Board of Management

- When a Chairperson of a Board of Management becomes aware of an allegation of abuse against a school employee, the Chairperson will privately inform the employee of the following:
 - the fact that an allegation has been made against him/her;
 - the nature of the allegation;
 - whether or not the Designated Liaison Person has reported the matter to the HSE or An Garda Síochána.
- The employee will be given a copy of the written allegation, and any other relevant documentation. The employee will be requested to respond to the allegation in writing to the Board of Management within a specified period of time. The employee will be informed that his/her explanation to the Board of Management will also have to be passed on to the HSE.
- In accordance with its duty of care the first priority of the Board of Management will be to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk. In this respect the Chairperson of the Board will as a matter of urgency take any necessary protective measures. These measures will be proportionate to the level of risk and will not unreasonably penalise the employee, financially or otherwise, unless necessary to protect pupils.
- If, in the Chairperson's opinion, the nature of the allegation warrants immediate action, the Chairperson, on behalf of the Board of Management, will direct that the employee absent him/herself from the school with immediate effect. Where the Chairperson is unsure as to whether the nature of the allegations warrants the absence of the employee from the school while the matter is being investigated, he/she will consult with the HSE and/or An Garda Síochána for advice as to the action that those authorities consider necessary. Following those consultations, the Chairperson will have due regard for the advice offered.
- Any absence by a school employee will be regarded as administrative leave of absence with pay and not a suspension. Such a leave of absence will not imply any degree of guilt on the part of the school employee. Where such a leave of absence is invoked, the Department of Education and Science will be contacted with regard to:
 - Formal approval for the paid leave of absence of the school employee; and
 - Departmental sanction for the employment of a substitute teacher.
- The Chairperson will convene an immediate meeting of the Board for this purpose and inform the Board members of the nature of the allegations, the action taken in respect of same and the outcome of any consultations with the HSE and/or An Garda Síochána.
- In the context of these procedures, where circumstances warrant it, as a precautionary measure in order to protect the children in the school and in accordance with the principles of natural justice and the presumption of innocence, the chairperson of the Board of Management is authorised by the school authority to direct an employee to immediately absent himself/herself from the school without loss of pay until the matter has been considered by the employer.

The employee will be invited to a meeting with the chairperson, the purpose of which is to inform the employee of the allegation and the action being taken. The employee may be accompanied by an appropriate person of his or her choice and will be so advised.

In any event, the employee will also be advised of the matter, in writing.

Allegations Against Employees Pertaining to Previous Employment / Incidents Outside of School Hours:

- In situations where the allegations of abuse relate to the past employment of the school employee and where these allegations are being investigated by either the HSE or An Garda Síochána the Chairperson of the Board of Management will maintain regular and close liaison with those authorities and a decision on the position of the school employee will be taken having due regard to the advice given to the Board of Management by those authorities. If the decision is taken that the school employee should take administrative leave of absence, the Department of Education and Science will be immediately informed.
- Where the alleged abuse has taken place within Ennis National School, or relates to the abuse of pupils of the school by school employees outside of school time, the Board of Management will convene a further meeting. At this meeting the Board will consider in detail the allegations that have been made against the school employee and the source of those allegations, the advice of the HSE and/or An Garda Síochána in relation to the allegation and the written response of the employee to the allegations. At this meeting
 - the person/agency who is alleging abuse by the school employee will be offered an opportunity to present his/her case to the Board and may be accompanied by another person in doing so.
 - Parents/guardians may act on behalf of a child.
 - Likewise the employee will be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of his/her case to the Board and may also be accompanied by another person.
- Having followed the procedures outlined above, and having satisfied itself that it has sufficient information to hand in order to make a determination in relation to the allegation, the Board will then make a decision on the action, if any, it considers necessary to take in respect of the employee. The Department of Education and Science will be informed of the outcome where the school employee had been directed to absent him/herself on administrative leave.

9. CONFIDENTIALITY

- All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse will only be shared on a need to know basis in the interests of the child.
- Giving information to those who need to have that information, for the protection of a child who may have been, or has been abused, is not a breach of confidentiality.
- Any Designated Liaison Person who is submitting a report to the health board or An Garda Síochána will inform a parent/guardian unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or place the child at further risk. A decision not to inform a parent/guardian will be recorded together with the reasons for not doing so.
- The Board of Management and staff of Ennis National School give an undertaking to deal with all child protection issues with the utmost confidentiality.

10. RELATED POLICIES

- *Code of Behaviour*
- *Anti-Bullying Policy*

11. POLICY RATIFICATION

The policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Ennis National School at its meeting held on March 6th 2017.

Signed: _____ Chairperson, Board of Management

Appendix 1

Child Protection Guidelines Checklist for School Employees

Designated Liaison Person:

Ann McMahon (Resource Teacher)

Deputy Designated Liaison Person:

Ray McInerney (Principal)

If a child discloses information to you:-

- Listen
- Do not ask leading questions
- Offer reassurance but do not promise not to tell
- Explain that other adults may need to be told - DLP
- Do not stop the child speaking
- Do not over react or comment
- Inform DLP - If you have a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern that a child is at risk or has suffered abuse, the DLP should contact the Health Board for advice
- At the earliest opportunity, record accurately what the child has said – Using the child's own words. Record date/time and context of the disclosure. Use child's PPS number – Not child's name
- Facts only
- Sketch signs of physical injury if appropriate
- Retain records for a period of 21 years

The following should also be reported to the DLP:

- An account from a person who saw a child being abused
- Injury consistent with abuse
- Dysfunctional behaviour
- Implausible explanations for injury or behaviour
- Consistent evidence over a period of time that a child is being emotionally or physically neglected

HSE Response:

- School is asked to monitor the situation
- Formal report is requested , sent by DLP and on receipt case is allocated to Social Worker
- Preliminary enquiry – Screening process
- Initial assessment

Possible outcomes:

- Case closed
- Family support
- Case Conference/Child Protection Plan

Reporting Procedures for DLP

- DLP receives report of child protection concern

- DLP records the report – date/time/context. Child’s registration number is used for recording purposes
- DLP makes decision on how to proceed based on information received
- DLP informs Chairperson of Board of Management that initial contact is being made with the HSE
- DLP makes contact with the HSE seeking advice (Do not give name of child at this point. Be very clear that you are seeking advice). Take the name of the person you spoke to and record conversation
- Duty Social Worker makes recommendation. This may involve school continuing to monitor the situation.

Record this decision and send written record of this decision to Health Board. Alternatively a formal referral made on standard reporting form may be recommended by Social Worker (Keep a copy on file in a secure place)

- If Health Board not available and case warrants immediate response – Gardaí are informed
- Decision made on informing/not informing parents – taking safety of the child into consideration as number one priority. A decision NOT to inform parent/s should only be made where there is a genuine concern for the safety of the child. Be transparent with parent/s and ensure that they are aware that you have a non-negotiable responsibility as DLP to act in the best interests of the child (Refer to Children First)
- If DLP decides not to contact Health Board in relation to the case – person who made original report must be informed in writing
- Continued monitoring of child should be recommended
- Child Protection concerns that have been reported to the HSE should be included in the Principal’s Report to Board of Management Meeting - Child’s name is not used

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

- **Chairperson BoM: Thomas Murray 086 8344934**
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- **HSE Duty Social Worker: 065 6863935**
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- **Gardaí: 065 6848100**
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- **Local Hospital: UL Hospital Limerick
061 301 111**
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- **Child Abuse Prevention Programme
01 6206346 / 076 6955547**

