

Child Protection Policy

Introductory Statement

The Board of Management recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and must be reflected in all of 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 St. Joseph's N.S. has agreed the following child protection policy:

1. The Board of Management has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the Departments 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 Sé McCarthy (**Principal**).
3. The Deputy Liaison Person (**Deputy DLP**) is Mrs Gráinne Kelly (**Deputy Principal**).
4. In its policies, practices and activities, St. Joseph's N.S. will adhere to the following principles of 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 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

The staff, parents and management of St. Joseph's N.S. have developed and agreed this policy in line with the current recommendations and guidelines relating to child abuse prevention and child protection guidelines.

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

- a) Prevention – curriculum provision
- b) Procedures – procedures for dealing with concerns / disclosures
- c) Practice – best practice in child protection

An individual copy of this policy document and the appended section from the Department of Education and Science Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures will be made available to all staff.

It is incumbent on all staff to familiarise themselves with 'Children First' and the DES child protection guidelines and procedures.

Schools have an obligation to provide students with the highest possible standard of care in order to promote their well-being and protect them from harm. School personnel are especially well placed to observe changes in behaviour, failure to develop or outward signs of abuse in children.

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' and the DES guidelines and procedures in relation to reporting concerns and /or disclosures of child abuse.
- Provide for on-going training in this and related areas for all school staff

Prevention

The Stay Safe Programme is the primary resource used in this school to provide education for children on abuse prevention. The programme is taught as part of the schools' SPHE curriculum under the strand unit Safety and Protection.

On enrolment of their child parents will be informed that the Stay Safe programme is in use in the school.

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.

Procedures

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: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children' (2011) and the Department of Education and Skills document, 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools' (2011).

The Staff and Management of this school have agreed:

- 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. This report will be recorded in the Child Protection Book stored in the Principal's office
- A strict adherence to maintain confidentiality – information regarding concerns or disclosures of abuse should only be given on a 'need to know' basis.
- Recognising that the safety and well-being of children attending the school is a priority, the Board undertakes to include Child Protection matters as items on the agenda of all Board meetings forthwith.
- Child Protection matters will be included automatically on the agenda of all staff meetings.
- The name of the DLP must be displayed in a prominent position near the entrance to the school.
- Any disclosures made to the relevant authorities will be reported at the subsequent Board of Management meeting including not only referrals, but including incidents where advice was sought.

- The Board will ensure that appropriate and on-going training as necessary will be available for DLP and the DDLP.
- The board fully endorses arrangements for the vetting of teaching and non-teaching staff as outlined in Circular 0094/2006, June 2006, for the Department of Education & Skills.
- The Board recognises that it has two duties of care. The primary duty is the protection, safety and welfare of the children attending St. Joseph's N.S. The Board as an employer also has duties and responsibilities towards its employees.
- As an employer, the Board will seek legal advice if an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee.
- The Board will adhere to the protocol outlined in Ch.5 (see Appendix) Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse of School Employees, in "Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools" (2011) to authorise any actions required to protect the children in its care. The Board notes that school employees may be subject to erroneous or malicious allegations. Any allegation of abuse should be dealt with sensitively. The employee should be treated fairly which includes the right not to be judged in advance of a full and fair enquiry. The Board accepts that the principles of natural justice and fair procedures must be adhered to.
- The Board believes that the academic, personal and social development of children flourishes in a culture where good relationships are encouraged, people feel valued and respected and appropriate support is available for those in difficulty.
- The Board is committed to the maintenance of the environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to express themselves and are listened to. All children in the school will be made aware that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried. In addition, opportunities will be included in the curriculum for children to develop the skills they need to keep them safe.
- This policy statement regarding Child Protection at St. Joseph's N.S. applies to all staff, members of the Board of Management, volunteers and contractors working in the school. This policy statement will be subject to review at the start of each academic year forthwith.

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 staffs 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 need 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 its appropriateness: -

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

The age and developmental stage of the child

Personnel should refer to our school's physical intervention policy should a child become a danger to him/herself or to others, or in the case of damage being done to property.

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 notified to the DLP and the parents/guardians 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 member involved is absent. A written copy of what has been agreed will be made and kept in the child's file.

Two members of staff will be present when dealing with intimate care/toileting needs. Any deviation from the agreed procedure will be recorded.

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 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 and principal and parents will be notified.

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. 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. 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.

Ratification of Policy

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

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Signed: _____
Principal

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date of next review: September 2018

The board further endorses the Principal, Sé McCarthy as the school DLP and Gráinne Kelly as Deputy DLP.

Ratification and Communication

This policy will be in operation in the school year 2017/2018, having been ratified by Staff and BoM. Every teacher will be provided with a copy of this policy for their files.

This Policy was ratified by the B.O.M. of St. Joseph's N.S., Rathwire, Killucan on the 25/10/2017

Signed: _____ Date: _____

(Chairperson) On behalf of the Board of Management

Appendix 1: As taken from the DES Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures

REPORTING OF CONCERNS AND ROLE OF TUSLA

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 should, in the first instance, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person in that school. The need for confidentiality at all times, as previously referred to, should be borne in mind.

Action to be taken by 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 should report the matter to the relevant health board immediately. It may be useful to note:

- i. A report should be made to the health board in person, by phone or in writing.
- ii. In the event of an emergency, or the non-availability of TUSLA staff, the

report should be made to An Garda Síochána. This may be done at any Garda Station.

It is recommended that all reports should include as much as possible of the information sought in the Standard Reporting Form as outlined in Appendix 1 of The Child Protection guidelines. Since all information requested might not be available to the person making a report, the forms should be completed as comprehensively as possible. When such a report is being made to a health board, the Chairperson of the Board of Management of the school should be informed. A decision on whether or not parents/guardians of the child should also be informed should be taken in accordance with the information contained in Chapter 1 Paragraph 1.2.3 (page 5) of the guidelines.

In cases where school personnel have concerns about a child, but are not sure whether to report the matter to the appropriate health board, they should seek appropriate advice.

To do so, the Designated Liaison Person should consult the appropriate health board staff. In consulting the appropriate health board staff, the Designated Liaison Person should be explicit that he/she is requesting advice and consultation and that he/she is not making a report. It would not be envisaged at this informal stage that the Designated Liaison Person would have to give identifying

details as are required when a report is being made. If TUSLA advises that a referral should be made, the Designated Liaison Person should act on that advice.

If following the discussion outlined above, the Designated Liaison Person decides that the concerns of the school employee should not be referred to TUSLA, the school employee should be given a clear statement, in writing, as to the reasons why action is not being taken. The school employee should be advised that, if he/she remains concerned about the situation, he/she is free to consult with or report to the TUSLA. Any such report would be covered by the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998.

All reports should be made to the duty social worker at the Child and family centre, Mullingar (0449344877)

ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF CHILD ABUSE BY SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

Introduction

The most important consideration to be taken into account by a Board of Management is the protection of children, and their safety and well-being must be a priority. However, because of the involvement of school employees, the Board of Management has duties in respect of them as well. The guidelines are offered to assist Boards of Management in having due regard to the rights and interests of the children under their care and those of the employee against whom an allegation is made.

As employers, Boards of Management should note that legal advice should always be sought in these cases as circumstances can vary from one case to another and it is not possible in these guidelines to address every scenario

It is important to note that there are two procedures to be followed:

- i) The reporting procedure in respect of the allegation;
- ii) The procedure for dealing with the employee.

In general the same person should not have responsibility for dealing with the reporting issue and the employment issue. In the case of primary schools, the Designated Liaison Person is responsible for reporting the matter to the appropriate health board while the Chairperson of the Board of Management, acting in consultation with his/her Board, is responsible for addressing the employment issues. However, where the allegation of abuse is against the Designated Liaison Person, the Chairperson of the Board of Management will assume the responsibility for reporting the matter to TUSLA.

Reporting procedure

Where an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee, the Designated Liaison Person within the school should immediately act in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy. A written statement of the allegation should be sought from the person/agency making the allegation (parents/guardians may make a statement on behalf of the child). The ability of TUSLA or the Board of Management to assess suspicions or allegations of abuse will depend on the amount and quality

of information conveyed to them. Whether or not the matter is being reported to TUSLA, the Designated Liaison Person should always inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management of the allegation.

School employees, other than the Designated Liaison Person, who receive allegations of abuse against another school employee, should report the matter without delay to the Designated Liaison Person. The Designated Liaison Person should then follow the prescribed procedures as laid out in this policy.

School employees who form suspicions regarding the conduct of another school employee should consult with the Designated Liaison Person. The Designated Liaison Person may wish to consult with the appropriate health board. If the Designated Liaison Person and the school employee are satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion, the Designated Liaison Person should report the matter to the relevant health board immediately. The Designated Liaison Person should also report the matter to the Chairperson of the Board of Management who should proceed in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy.

Action to be taken by Chairperson

When a Chairperson of a Board of Management becomes aware of an allegation of abuse against a school employee, the Chairperson should privately inform the employee of the following:

- i) The fact that an allegation has been made against him/her;
- ii) The nature of the allegation;
- iii) Whether or not the matter has been reported to TUSLA by the Designated Liaison Person;

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 of time. The employee should be told that his/her explanation to the Board of Management would also have to be passed on to TUSLA.

At this stage, it should be remembered that the first priority should be to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk. The Chairperson of the Board of Management should as a matter of urgency take any necessary protective measures. These measures should be proportionate to the level of risk and should not unreasonably penalise the employee, financially or otherwise, unless necessary to protect children.

If, in the Chairperson's opinion, the nature of the allegation warrants immediate action, the Chairperson, on behalf of the Board of Management, should 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, s/he should consult with the local Child Care Manager of TUSLA and/or An Garda Síochána for advice as to the action that those authorities would consider necessary. Following those consultations, the Chairperson should have due regard for the advice offered.

Any absence by a school employee would be regarded as administrative leave of absence with pay and not a suspension. Such a leave of absence would 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 should be contacted with regard to:

- i) Formal approval for the paid leave of absence of the school employee; and
- ii) Departmental sanction for the employment of a substitute teacher.

Further follow-up required

Whether or not the employee is absent from the school on administrative leave, it is necessary for the Chairperson to inform the Board of Management immediately of the matter. The Chairperson should 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 TUSLA and/or An Garda Síochána. Members of the Board of Management should be reminded of their serious responsibilities to maintain strict confidentiality about all matters relating to the issue. The principles of due process and natural justice should be adhered to by the Board.

It should be noted that, in certain situations, it might not be possible for the Board of Management to reach any definitive conclusions as to whether the alleged abuse actually occurred. Such a situation could occur where the allegations of abuse relate to the past employment of the school employee and where these allegations are being investigated by either TUSLA or An Garda Síochána. In such situations it may not prove possible for a Board of Management to conduct any proper enquiry into the allegations. In these cases the Chairperson of the Board of Management should maintain regular and close liaison with those authorities and a decision on the position of the school employee should be taken having due regard to the advice given to the Board of Management by those authorities. If a decision is taken that the school employee should take administrative leave of absence, the Department of Education and Science should be immediately informed.

However, where the alleged abuse has taken place within its school, or relates to the abuse of pupils of the school by school employees outside of school time, the Board of Management should convene a further meeting. At this meeting the Board should consider in detail the allegations which have been made against the school employee and the source of those allegations, the advice of the health boards 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 should 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 should 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 for it to make a determination in relation to the allegation, the Board should 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 should be informed of the outcome where the school employee had been absent on administrative leave.

Responsibility of Staff

All staff must read the current policy and the Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse as provided to them by the Board of Management.

They must also sign the current Child Protection Procedures for all Staff.

Appendix 2: 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.

The checklist is designed as an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. Individual Boards of Management may wish to include other items in the checklist that are of particular relevance to the school in question.

	Yes/No
Has the Board formally adopted a child protection policy in accordance with the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	
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'?	
Are there both a DLP and a Deputy DLP currently appointed?	
Are the relevant contact details (TUSLA and an Garda Síochána) to hand?	
Has the DLP attended available child protection training?	
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?	
Has the Board ensured that the Department's 'Child Protection Procedures for primary and post primary schools' are available to all school personnel?	
Have the Board arrangements in place to communicate the school's child protection policy to new school personnel?	
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'?	
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?	
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 the HSE was made?	
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?	
Were child protection matters reported to the Board appropriately recorded in the Board minutes?	
Is the Board satisfied that all records relating to child protection are appropriately filed and stored securely?	
Has the Board ensured that the Parents' Association (if any), has been provided with the school's child protection policy?	
Has the Board ensured that the school's child protection policy is available to parents on request?	
Has the Board ensured that the Stay Safe Programme is implemented in full in the school?	

(applies to primary school)	
Has the Board ensured that the SPHE curriculum is implemented in full in the school?	
Is the Board satisfied that the Department's requirements for Garda Vetting have been met in respect of all school personnel (employees and volunteers)?*	
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?*	
Is the Board satisfied that, from a child perspective, thorough recruitment and selection procedures are applied by the school in relation to all school personnel (Employees and volunteers)?*	
Is the Board satisfied that the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools' are being fully and adequately implemented by the school?	
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's child protection policy and /or its implementation that require further improvement?	
Has the Board ensured that any areas for improvement that was identified in any previous review of the school's child protection policy have been adequately addressed?	

*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 _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date _____

Signed _____
Principal

Date _____

Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the child protection policy

To: The Parents Association of St. Joseph's NS Rathwire

The Board of Management of St. Joseph's NS 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 25/10/2017.
- 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: _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: _____

Signed: _____
Principal

Date: _____