**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

**09th October 2019**

**INTRODUCTION**

This policy document has been drawn up by staff, parents and Board of Management of Killeen National School in response to recent changes in legislation. The policy takes account of the provisions of the following legislation:

**The Education Act 1998 The Education Welfare Act 2000 The Protection of Persons Reporting**

**Child Abuse Act 1993 Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 Safety,**

**Health at Work Act, 2005**

In all instances of suspicion or allegations of abuse or neglect, the following guidelines will be

referenced

**Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children** (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2017)

**Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017** (Department of Education and Skills, 2017)

**AIMS OF POLICY**

The aims of the Child Protection Policy are to:

* Put in place clear procedures for dealing with and reporting suspected/alleged cases of child

neglect or abuse.

* Endeavour to safeguard the well-being of the child and intervene when necessary to protect

their rights.

* Help school personnel recognise the signs of neglect or abuse and know how to report it.
* Provide a safe environment for our school community.

**DEFINITION OF ABUSE (Chapter 2 – Children First 2017)**

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types:

* Neglect
* Emotional abuse
* Physical abuse
* Sexual Abuse

**DEFINITION OF 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, attachment to and affection from adults

**DEFINITION OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

Emotional Abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a care giver and a child rather than in specific events or patterns of events. It occurs when a child’s needs for affection, approval,

consistency and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested

in terms of physical signs or symptoms

**DEFINITION OF SEXUAL ABUSE**

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his/her gratification or sexual arousal

More details of each type of abuse and how they might be recognised are contained in Chapter 2, Child Protection Procedures 2017.

**GUIDELINES FOR RECOGNISING THE SIGNS OF ABUSE** (**2.3 Child Protection Procedures 2017**)

The recognition of abuse normally runs along three stages:

1. **Considering the possibility** – if a child appears to have suffered an inexplicable and suspicious injury, seems distressed without obvious reason, displays unusual behaviour problems or appears fearful in the company of parents/carers
2. **Observing signs of abuse** a cluster of pattern of signs is the most reliable indicator of abuse. Children may make direct or indirect disclosures, which should always be taken seriously. Less obvious disclosures may be gently explored with a child, without direct questioning (which may be more usefully be carried out by Tusla or Gardaí). Play situations such as drawing or story telling may reveal significant information which could be considered in relation to the child’s social and family context, and it is important to always be open to alternative explanations.
3. **Recording of Information** it is important to establish the grounds for concern, by obtaining as much information as possible. Observations should be recorded and should include dates, times, names, locations context and any information which could be considered relevant or which might facilitate further assessment/investigation. When recording information, a coded system should be used, and such information should be stored in a secure location.

**HANDLING DISCLOSURES FROM CHILDREN**

(**3.3 Child Protection Procedures 2017**)

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

When information is offered in confidence, the member of staff will need tact and sensitivity in

responding to the disclosure. The member of staff will need to reassure the child and retains his/her

trust while explaining the need for action and the possible consequence, 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. While the basis for concern must be established as comprehensively as possible, the

following advice is offered to school personnel to whom a child makes a disclosure of abuse.

* React Calmly
* Listen carefully and attentively
* Take the child seriously
* Reassure the child that they have taken the right action in talking to you
* Do not promise to keep anything secret
* Ask questions for clarification only. Do not ask leading questions
* Check back with the child that what you have heard is correct and understood
* Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser
* Ensure the child understands the procedures that will follow
* Make a written record of the conversation as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible
* Treat the information confidentially, subject to the requirements of the Children First National Guidance 2017 and relevant legislation
* This written information should be given to and retained by the DLP

**Statutory Obligations on Registered Teachers (Chapter 4, Child Protection Procedures, 2017)**

The Children First Act, 2015 has placed statutory obligations on specific people to report child protection concerns that are at or above the threshold of harm (as defined in that Act), to Tusla. Such persons are referred to as “mandated persons” under the Act. All teachers who are registered with the Teaching Council are mandated persons under the Children First Act, 2015.

Any member of school personnel, including a registered teacher who receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected, is required to report the matter, without delay, to the DLP in the school.

The **Principal**, Jessica Whelahan, **will act as DLP** following ratification by the Board of Management. The **Deputy Liaison Person is Lorraine Carroll**. The DLP has specific responsibility for child protection and will represent the school in all dealings with Tusla, Garda Siochana and other parties, in connection with allegations of abuse.

**ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY THE DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON** (**5.3 Child Protection Procedures, 2017**)

The DLP must follow the procedures set out in section 5.3 where concerns about a child are brought to his/her attention or where the DLP has his/her own concerns about a child. The DLP must ensure that the reporting requirements are followed correctly and promptly, including, where applicable, those in relation to making a mandated report jointly with a registered teacher.

* A concern may be made known initially to Tusla either in person, by phone or in writing, to the local social work duty service in the area where the child lives.
* It is generally most helpful if persons wishing to report child abuse concerns make personal

contact with Tusla. This will facilitate the social worker in gathering as much information as possible about the child and his parent/carers.

* The Tusla Report Form shall be used for reporting all concerns to Tusla.
* In the event of an emergency, or the non-availability of Tusla staff, the report should be

made to the Gardaí. This may be done at any Garda Station.

* At each Board of Management meeting, the Principal’s report to the board shall include a Child Protection Oversight Report (5.5, Child Protection Procedures, 2017).

In the case where the 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

DLP should consult Tusla. If Tusla advises that a referral should be made; the DLP should act on that advice.

In following the discussion outlined, the DLP decides that the concerns of the school employee should

not be referred toTusla, the school employee should be given a clear statement,

in writing, as to the reason why the 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

Tusla. Again, the Tusla Report Form should be used. Any such report would be covered by the **Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998**.

**CONFIDENTIALITY** (**1.3.11 Child Protection Procedures, 2017**)

All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse should be only shared on a need to know

basis, in the interest of the child. The test is whether or not the person has any legitimate involvement

or role in dealing with the issue

**Giving information to those who need to have that information for the protection of the child who may have been or has been abused, is not a breach of confidentiality.**

The DLP who is submitting a report to Tusla or Garda Siochana should inform a

parent/guardian, unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or place that child at further risk. A

decision not to inform a parent/guardian should be briefly recorded together with the reason for not

doing so.

In emergency situations, where Tusla cannot be contacted, and the child appears at

immediate and serious risk, an Garda Siochana should be contacted immediately.

**Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending a Tusla**

**intervention.**

**Record Keeping (3.4 Child Protection Procedures, 2017)**

When child abuse or neglect is suspected, it is essential to have a written record of all information available. School personnel shall note carefully what they have observed and when they have observed it.

The DLP shall record all concerns or allegations of child abuse brought to his or her attention, and the actions taken following receipt of a concern or allegation of child abuse.

**National Vetting Persons (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016**

The National Vetting Bureau places statutory obligations on school authorities to obtain a vetting disclosure from the National Vetting Bureau prior to employing, contracting or placing a person to undertake relevant work or activities with children or vulnerable persons or prior to permitting a person to undertake such relevant work or activities on behalf of the school.

**Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse regarding School Employees (Chapter 7, Child Protection Procedures, 2017)**

There are two procedures to be followed:

(a) the reporting procedure in respect of the allegation/suspicion

(b) the procedure for dealing with the employee

In general the same person shall not have responsibility for dealing with the reporting issue and the employment issue. The DLP is responsible for reporting the matter to Tusla while the employer is responsible for addressing the employment issues. However, where the allegation / suspicion relates to the DLP, the employer shall assume responsibility for seeking advice from and/or reporting the matter to Tusla, as appropriate.

**PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE THROUGH CURRICULAR PROVISION**

*The following programmes are already in place in the school*

* *Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Stay Safe, Grow in Love, Walk Tall*
* *Self-esteem enhancement programmes/activities – circle time, Healthy Living*
* *Parental involvement; parents are made aware of programmes taught in school at induction*

*meetings and information seminars on related topics. Parents also get feedback throughout the course of programmes e.g. Stay Safe and RSE worksheet completed in collaboration with*

*parents.*

* *Information meetings for parents using guest speakers from outside agencies.(occasionally)*
* *Whole school climate and ethos child friendly, supportive environment, display children’s*

*work/creativity, assemblies, adults modelling good behaviour, celebrating achievements,*

*acknowledging effort and success.*

**STAFF TRAINING**

Staff development and in service. The DLP will inform staff of current practices and relevant in service

training courses; staff in – service in school on related topics.

**EXISTING SCHOOL POLICIES**

The following school policies which compliments the Child Protection Policy are already in place in the

school:

* Substance Misuse Policy
* Code of Behaviour and Anti Bullying Policy
* Health & Safety Statement
* Mission Statement
* Healthy Lunch Policy

This policy was ratified on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ by the Board of Management.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Principal

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson BoM