

Limerick School Project Child Protection and Vetting Policy

Introductory Statement

The Limerick School Project is a primary school which operates under the ethos of Educate Together which is based on the following principles: Multi-denominational, Co-educational, Child centred and democratically run.

Our Mission Statement is to promote a philosophy of education in which no child is considered an outsider; which promotes the fullest development of ability irrespective of gender, class or stereotype and which encapsulates this ethos in a democratic partnership uniquely combining the involvement of parents with the professional role of teachers.

In terms of recognition of child abuse and response to child abuse, the Limerick School Project will follow the revised "Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools", Circular 0065/2011 .

This policy reflects the underlying philosophy that the Limerick School Project promotes the general welfare, health, development and safety of children and young adults in an environment where mutual respect and self esteem are nurtured and in line with the ethos of our school. It is the shared concerns and expectations of the children, parents, staff and management that create the unique character of the Limerick School Project.

The staff, parents and management of Limerick School Project have developed and agreed this policy on child protection in line with the current recommendations and guidelines on

- a) Curriculum provision - prevention
- b) Procedures for dealing with concerns/disclosures - procedures
- c) Best practice in child protection - practice.

An annual review of this policy will be undertaken by the BOM and completion of this annual review must be communicated to the Parent

Association in writing with a view to making any changes necessary and to plan for training required for the following school year.

Aims

This policy aims to

- Provide a personal safety skills education, which specifically addresses abuse prevention for all children.
- Create a safe, trusting, responsive and caring environment.
- 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 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools' Circular 0065/2011 .
- Provide ongoing training in this and related areas for all staff.
- Promote the welfare of all pupils in our care.

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. All parents will be informed that the Stay Safe programme is used in the school.

The formal lessons of the programme will be taught in Senior Infants, Second Class, Fourth Class and Sixth Class. All topics of the programme will be covered.

The key points of the programme will be taught coming up to the summer holidays.

Staff will make every effort to ensure that the messages of the programme are reinforced whenever possible.

Procedures

All staff in this school will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in The Limerick School Project Guidelines

and which is in line with 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools', Circular 0065/2011 .

Ensure that the DLP has all important contact details for key child protection personnel to hand.

The Board of Management of this school has appointed Matt Wallen as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Orla McCoy as the deputy DLP.

The staff and management of this school have agreed:

- The recording of concerns/disclosures and the reporting of same to the DLP (deputy DLP where appropriate) is crucial.
- All records/reports will be dated and signed by the person making the report.
- A strict adherence to maintaining confidentiality.
- Both the DLP and the deputy DLP (or another member of staff as appropriate) will be present when meeting with parents/guardians on any child protection issue.
- Dated records of conversations with parents, HSE, Gardaí or legal experts together with their names will be kept.
- Children's clar uimhir (registration number) will be used on reports and records instead of names.

Child Protection Procedures: Limerick School Project

Types of Abuse

These guidelines describe the four types of child abuse: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time. Child abuse can often be difficult to identify and may present in many forms.

Neglect: Where a child's need for food, warmth, shelter, nurturance and safety are not provided, to the extent that the child suffers significant harm.

Emotional Abuse: Where a child's need for affection, approval and security are not being met and has not been met for some time by their parent(s) or guardian(s).

Physical Abuse: Where a child is assaulted or injured in some way that is deliberate.

Sexual Abuse: Where a child is used for the sexual gratification of another. Sexual abuse does not usually occur in isolation, children who experience sexual abuse often experience physical abuse and/or neglect. Emotional abuse is always part of the sexual abuse of a child.

A core principle of the guidelines is that, in reporting child abuse the safety and well being of the young person will take priority.

Role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP):

- The Principal will act as DLP following ratification by the Board of Management. Should circumstances warrant it, the Deputy Principal shall act as DLP.
- The DLP has specific responsibility for child protection and will represent the school in all dealings with the HSE, An Garda Síochána and other parties in connection with allegations of abuse or child protection concerns. All matters pertaining to the processing or investigation of child abuse should be processed through the DLP.
- The DLP will inform all school personnel of the availability of the Children First Guidelines in the school. S/he will circulate to all staff chapters 3 and 4 and Appendix 1 of these guidelines and advise on good practice.
- The DLP will be available to staff for consultation regarding suspicions of abuse. S/he will keep records of these consultations.
- The DLP will maintain proper records in a secure, confidential manner and in a secure location.
- The DLP will keep up to date on current developments regarding child protection.

Procedure for dealing with disclosures:

The following procedure will be followed in Limerick School Project by staff or by any adult participating in school activities if a disclosure of abuse is made.

(1)

- Listen to the child

- 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.

(2) The teacher, staff member or other adult to whom the child has spoken will report the exchange to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP). The DLP will record receipt of written record of conversation.

(3) In cases where school personnel have concerns about a child, but are not sure whether to report the matter to the appropriate HSE, they will seek appropriate advice. To do so, the Designated Liaison Person will consult the appropriate HSE staff. In consulting the HSE staff the DLP should be explicit that he/she is requesting advice and consultation and that he/she is not making a report. It is not envisaged at this informal stage that the DLP would have to give identifying details as are required when a report is being made. If a HSE advises that a referral should be made the DLP will act on that advice.

(4) The DLP will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management. The Chairperson of the Board of Management will support the implementation of the Child Protection Procedures as laid down by the Limerick School Project.

(5) The DLP will make a formal report to the HSE if there are 'reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been abused or is being abused or is at risk of abuse'.

- Specific indication from the child that (s) he was abused;
- An account by a person who saw the child being abused;
- Evidence, such as an 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 may be a case of abuse. An example of

this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour;

- Consistent indication, over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

(6) The DLP will provide information as required by the standard reporting form and by telephone to the duty Social Worker in the HSE.

(7) If the DLP is making a formal report to the HSE the child's parents/carers will be informed that such a report is being submitted, unless doing so is likely to endanger the child. (4.5.2 Children First).

(8) In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate serious risk and a duty Social Worker is unavailable, An Garda Síochána will be contacted. Under no circumstances will a child be left in a dangerous situation pending HSE intervention. (4.5.3 Children First).

(9) All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse will only be 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. (1.2.1. Child Protection).

Circulation and Implementation of the guidelines:

The guidelines will be available from the Principal to the B.O.M., Patron Board, PTA, Teachers, Special Needs Assistants and other staff. Parents will be advised of the guidelines through the Thursday Newsletter and the School Secretary will make copies available to them on request. Views and comments will be invited from all the parties. Once the guidelines have been ratified by the Board of Management they will be implemented immediately.

Practice

The staff and Board of Management of the school have considered the following areas as areas of specific concern in relation to child protection.

Following discussion and consultation the staff and Board of Management has agreed the following practices be adopted:

a) Children with specific toileting/intimate care needs:

In all situations where a pupil needs assistance with toileting/intimate care a meeting will be convened, before the child starts school, between parents/guardians, class teacher, special needs assistant, principal and if appropriate the pupil. The purpose of this 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 members of staff involved are absent. A written copy of what has been agreed will be made and kept in the child's file. In all circumstances two members of staff will be present when dealing with intimate care/toileting needs. Any deviation from the agreed procedure will be recorded and notified to the parents/guardians.

b) Toileting Accidents

A variety of toilet wipes, 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 to clean and change themselves. Parents will always be notified of such incidents. If a child has an accident involving wetting or soiling and is unable to change their clothes themselves 2 members of staff help the child change. Parents will be notified and a record of the incident will be kept.

c) One-to-One teaching

It is the policy of this school that one-to-one teaching is often in the best interest of the child. Every effort will be made to ensure that the environment in which this takes place is open. Parents of children who are to be involved in one-to-one teaching will be notified and their permission sought.

d) 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 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. Supervising staff stand at the door of the dressing rooms within view of the pool. If there is ever a need to enter the dressing room they will move about the area rather than standing in one place. Male teachers will only supervise the boys dressing room. Female teachers may supervise both boys and girls dressing rooms in the absence of male teachers.

e) Recruitment and Selection of Staff.

Garda vetting will be required for all teaching and non-teaching staff.

GUIDELINES ON PROTECTING CHILDREN AND STAFF

Protection of the child is part of the duty of care owed by the Limerick School Project. This duty of care and protection is also extended to staff. These guidelines are statements of good practice and are designed to protect staff from allegations of inappropriate behaviour. In applying these consistently they will also protect the child.

Limerick School Project staff is required to be aware of these guidelines, so that they can feel they are working in a safe context with clearly established codes of good practice. These guidelines provide support and protection for both children and staff.

In carrying out their duties and adhering to a professional standard of behaviour staff:

- **Will not** spend unnecessary time alone with a child

- **Will not** take a child alone in a car, except in absolute emergencies
- **Will not** take a child to their home
- **Will** leave class room door open when working alone with a pupil

If these must happen, do so with the full knowledge and consent of the principal and the consent of parent(s)/guardian(s).

Avoid the Following at all times;

- Engaging in rough physical or sexually provocative games,
- Engaging in inappropriate touching of any kind,
- Engaging in inappropriate conversation or behaviour in the presence of or within earshot of a student
- Allowing the use of inappropriate language to go unchallenged.
- Making sexually suggestive comments about or to a person, even in fun,
- Doing things of a personal nature for children, that they can do themselves
- Developing special relationships with an individual child that does not fall within your professional duties,
- Favouring one child over another,
- Allowing allegations made by a child go unchallenged or unrecorded.

SUPERVISION

- Children should not be left unattended between 8.30a.m. and 2.10p.m. Teachers will always supervise them.
- Any activity that could cause harm to themselves or others should not be allowed. Staff will be vigilant of this.
- The crèche supervisors will supervise children attending the crèche at all times.

DELIVERY OF PERSONAL AND INTIMATE CARE

Personal and intimate care includes dressing, undressing (other than coats, shoes, socks, jumpers and sweatshirts) washing, bathing, showering, drying and toileting.

GOOD PRACTICE IN THE DELIVERY OF PERSONAL & INTIMATE CARE

- To promote the general welfare, health, development and safety of the child
- To create an atmosphere which respects the privacy of each child, and treats children with due sensitivity and care
- To encourage the child to have a positive image of their own body. To develop a sense of identity and positive self-esteem, promoting self confidence.
- Appropriate segregation of the sexes should be available at all times
- Privacy should be ensured, a child should never be exposed unnecessarily
- To be involved as far as possible, in their own intimate care. To be consistently cared for and offered choices where possible and appropriate
- To be included in conversations and discussions that affect themselves
- To have procedures explained to them before they happen and have their questions answered
- To always have two members of staff present during intimate/personal care procedures.
- If a child has an accident involving wetting or soiling and is unable to change their clothes themselves 2 members of staff help the child change. The parents will be informed of this.

Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse by School Employees or Volunteers

Introduction

The Board of Management of the Limerick School Project has adopted the guidelines of the Department of Education and Science in relation to child protection. The most important consideration to be taken into account by the Board of Management is the protection of children and their safety and well being will be a priority. However, because of the involvement of school

employees the Board of Management has duties in respect of them as well. These procedures are to assist the Board 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.

Action taken by Limerick School Project in formally reporting an allegation of child abuse against an employee/volunteer will be based on an opinion formed reasonably and in good faith.

As an employer the Board of Management of Limerick School Project has a dual role to support both the child and the employee/volunteer. All procedures will be transparent and fair, and any allegation of abuse will be dealt with sensitively. The Board of Management will seek to promote the rights and dignity of all individuals concerned. An appropriate response to other staff, volunteers and the wider community will be provided, with due regard to the right to privacy of those directly involved, and to the administration of justice. Support will be provided for staff, volunteers, parents and children including counselling where necessary. Positive steps will be taken to restore the good name and reputation of a staff member/volunteer who has been wrongly accused of child abuse.

It is the intention that all members of the school community who have unsupervised access to children have undergone the Garda Vetting process and will be re-vetted on a regular basis.

The school will use Garda Vetting as part of a wider process to ensure the protection and safety of all members of the school community.

The process of Garda Vetting is carried out by the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU). The function of the GCVU is to provide all details of ***'all prosecutions, successful or not, pending or completed, and/or convictions'*** in respect of an applicant to a registered organisation.

All offers of employment to non-teaching staff and volunteers are 'subject to satisfactory vetting by the Garda Central Vetting Unit'.

- Creche supervisors will apply for Garda Vetting
- Sports Coaches will be expected to have completed Garda Vetting through their respective sporting bodies i.e. IRFU, FAI, GAA etc.

Failure to complete the Garda Vetting form will automatically disqualify the candidate. The provision of inaccurate information on the Garda Vetting Application form, such as an inaccurate date of birth or address, may also disqualify.

Candidates will be able to challenge the information provided by the GCVU to avoid errors or cases of mistaken identity. In such cases, re-vetting will take place.

All returned GV forms will be handled in strictest confidence.

Complete forms will only be retained by the school in the event of a successful appointment and will be appropriately sealed and retained in a secure location.

In all decisions, it is recognised that the school will take as its first priority its responsibility, to the protection of children attending school activities.

Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the DLP:

1. When an allegation is brought to the attention of the DLP 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). If a written statement is not forthcoming the DLP will make a written account of the allegation including the name of the person making the allegation and the date received. The person making the allegation will be informed of this and issued with a copy.
2. The DLP will then inform the Chairperson of the allegation.
3. The "Principal's Report to each Board of Management meeting will contain the number of child protection cases where advice was sought from the HSE (even if no further action was advised) and where formal referrals were made to the HSE.

4. The DLP will seek advice from the HSE in relation to the allegation.
5. A written record of the advice given including the name of the HSE professional and the date will be kept on file.
6. All decisions taken based on this advice will be documented and reasons given for action/non-action.
7. The DLP will contact parents appropriately without causing alarm. The DLP will have the deputy DLP present during all meetings with parents. Parents/guardians/agencies making a written statement on behalf of a child will be informed that a copy of the statement will be shown to the alleged abuser, the Chairperson of the BOM and other parties as necessary. They will be informed at this meeting of the steps, which will be followed according to the DES guidelines on child protection and will be kept informed as information becomes available.
8. The DLP will be acquainted with legislation which is relevant in relation to their role.

The Role of the Chairperson:

1. When the chairperson of the Board of Management becomes aware of an allegation of abuse against a school employee, the Chairperson will privately inform the employee of the following:
 - a) The fact that an allegation has been made against him/her
 - b) The nature of the allegation
 - c) Whether or not advice has been sought from or the matter reported to the appropriate HSE by the Designated Liaison Person.
2. 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 maximum of 5 working days. The employee will be told that his/her explanation to the Board of Management will also be passed to the HSE.
3. Taking into consideration the advice of the HSE and legal advice and that the first priority is to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk 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 children.
4. If, in the Chairpersons 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. This leave will be considered Administrative Leave. 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 will consult with the Child Care Manager of the HSE, the school solicitor and/or An Garda Síochána for advice as to the action that those authorities consider necessary. Following those consultations the Chairperson should have due regard for the advice offered. The role of the Chairperson is one of consideration and assessment of the allegations and not one of investigation.
 5. The Chairperson will inform the Board of Management immediately of the matter. 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, school solicitor and/or An Garda Síochána. Members of the Board will be reminded of their serious responsibilities to retain strict confidentiality about all matters relating to the issue. The Board will adhere to the principles of due process and natural justice.
 6. In certain situations, it may not be possible for the Board of Management to reach any definitive conclusions as to whether the alleged abuse actually occurred. This may be because the allegations of abuse relate to the past employment of the school employee and where these allegations are being investigated by either the HSE and/or An Garda Síochána. In such situations it may not prove possible for a Board of Management to conduct any proper inquiry into the allegations but the Chairperson of the Board 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 the HSE/An Garda Síochána and the school solicitor. If a decision is taken that the school employee should take administrative leave of absence the Department of Education & Science will be immediately informed.

7. However, where the alleged abuse has taken place within the 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, which 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.
8. 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.
9. 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 will then make a decision on the action, if any, it considers necessary to take in respect of the employee. This will involve either seeking advice from the HSE/Gardaí or legal opinion or reporting to the HSE. The Department of Education and Science will be informed of the outcome where the school employee had been absent on administrative leave.

Any absence by a school employee will be regarded as administrative leave of absence and not as a suspension. Such a leave 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:

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

Links to other policy areas:

Issues that relate to bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the Anti-Bullying and Code of Behaviour policies of this school.

Other issues involving health and safety are dealt with under our Health and Safety Statement.

Review and Monitoring:

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management annually or before if the need arises and in line with any change in legislation. Completion of this review will be communicated to the Parent Association in writing.

Ratification by the Board of Management: This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management on _____.