

	<p><i>"Great oaks from little acorns grow"</i></p>	<p>Park National School, Park, Youghal, Co. Cork.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Tel: 024 97282</p> <p style="text-align: right;">email: parknationalschool@gmail.com</p> <p style="text-align: right;">www.parkns.ie</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Uimhir Rolla: 17794L</p>

Child Protection Policy

This policy is in response to recent changes in legislation following the commencement of the remaining provisions of the Children first Act, 2015 published in December 11th 2017, the publication of the Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 and the Child protection procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017. It also takes account of the provisions of each of the following pieces of legislation

- Freedom of Information Act 1997
- Data Protection Act 2018
- The Education Act 1998
- The Child Welfare Act 2000

The Board of Management of Park National School 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, the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, 2017, the B.O.M. of Park National School has agreed the following child protection policy.

The BOM has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017, as part of this overall Child Protection Policy.

In its policies, practices and activities, Park National School 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 'risk of harm' 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 School will also adhere to the above principles in relation to any adult pupil with special vulnerability

Responsibilities of the B.O.M

The Board of management of Park N.S. should

- ensure, as far as practicable, that the children are safe from harm while availing of the school's services.
- carry out a risk assessment (Template 1, Child Protection Procedures, 2017) of any potential for 'risk of harm' (as defined in the Children First Act) to a child while they are attending the school or while they are participating in school activities.
- prepare and display a written Child Safeguarding Statement in accordance with the requirements of the Children First Act, 2015.
- appoint a 'relevant person' (DLP) as the first point of contact in respect of the school's Child Safeguarding Statement.
- Review the Child Safeguarding Statement using Template 3, Child Protection Procedures, 2017. This statement must be made available to parents, PA and to the DES upon request. It must also be displayed in a prominent place in the school along with the names of the DLP and DDLP.
- Provide a written notification to the P.A. (Parents Association) and to the Patron that the review has taken place using Template 4, Child Protection Procedures, 2017.
- Provide a copy of its Child Safeguarding Statement(Template 2, Child Protection Procedures, 2017) to members of the school personnel and, where requested, to parents, members of the public and to Tusla.

Certain policies such as Park National Schools Code of Behaviour/Anti-bullying Policy, Pupil Attendance Policy and the Supervision of Pupils Policy will take particular account of this Child Protection Policy. This policy will also be considered with reference to the participation by pupils in sporting activities, other extra-curricular activities and school outings. Other practices and activities, where child protection might have particular relevance, will take due consideration of the procedures outlined with this policy. The Board has ensured that the necessary policies, protocols or practice as appropriate are in place in respect of each of the above listed items.

This policy has been made available to school personnel and is readily accessible to parents on request. A copy of this policy will be made available to the DES and the patron if requested.

The DLP is Karen Hennessy and the DDLP is Elaine O' Grady

DLP

The DLP acts as a key resource person to any member of school personnel who has a child protection concern. S/he ensures that the reporting requirements of the Child Protection procedures, 2017 are followed correctly and promptly and that all appropriate records are properly maintained. Where an allegation of abuse is made against the DLP, the Chairperson of the B.O.M will assume the role of the DLP. The DLP will be the designated person in dealing with Tusla, An Garda Síochána and other parties in connection with allegations of and/or concerns about child abuse and neglect. The DLP will be responsible for providing the Child Protection Oversight Report at each meeting.

The Oversight Report will contain information under four headings, as follows:

- Allegations of abuse made against members of staff
- Other child protection concerns in respect of pupils in the school(concerns which do not involve members of staff)
- Concerns arising from alleged bullying behaviour amongst pupils
- Summary data in respect of reporting

Details of the information to be provided under these four sections is set out in sections 9.5 to 9.8 of the Child Protection procedures, 2017.

Registered Teachers

Registered teachers, as mandated persons, have two main statutory obligations under the Children First Act, 2015 and these are as follows:

- To report any knowledge, belief or reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been harmed, is being harmed or at the risk of being harmed to Tusla. (Section 2 of the Children First Act defines the 'threshold of harm' in relation to child protection concerns).

- To assist Tusla in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report, if requested by Tusla in accordance with the Act.

Reporting of Concerns.

If any member of staff including a registered teacher receives an allegation or has the suspicion that a child may have been abused or neglected, is being abused or neglected or at risk of such he/she must report the matter without delay to the DLP. If the allegation relates to the DLP he/she must without delay report the matter to the Chairperson. Where the DLP and registered teacher both agree that there are reasonable grounds for concern in relation to child protection concerns they shall jointly consider whether the concern is at or above the defined threshold of harm. If it is a report must be submitted as a mandated report to Tusla. using the Tusla Report Form available at www.tusla.ie)

A DLP who is submitting a report to Tusla should inform a parent/guardian that a report is being made and the reasons for the decision to report except in the following circumstances:

- If by doing so, the child will be placed at further risk
- In cases where the family's knowledge of the report could impair Tusla's ability to carry out a risk assessment
- If the reporter is of the reasonable opinion that by doing so it may place the reporter at risk of harm from the family

Under no circumstance should a child be left in a situation that exposes him/her to harm or risk of harm pending intervention by Tusla. If it is considered that a child is in immediate danger and Tusla cannot be contacted, An Garda Síochána should be contacted without delay.

Record keeping Requirements

All records in relation to Child Protection concerns should be kept in a secure place.(Locked in a filing cabinet in Principal's Office)

Record keeping requirements in relation to child protection concerns are set out in Chapter 3 Section 3.4 of the Child Protection procedures, 2017.

Allegations against members of school personnel

Where an allegation of abuse is made against a member of school personnel, the DLP shall always inform the B.O.M. The procedures outlined in Chapter 7 of the Child Protection Procedures must then be followed. The Board of Management must have in place a written protocol for authorising immediate action when there is an urgent child safeguarding requirement to immediately absent an employee from the school (see Appendix 3 of the Child Protection Procedures, 2017 for template Protocol authorising immediate action).

The Chairperson and the DLP should make the employee aware privately

1. That an allegation has been made against him/her
2. Of the nature of the allegation
3. Whether or not Tusla or Gardaí has been informed

The Chairperson must take the necessary steps to protect the child and may consult the BOM in this matter. The BOM may direct that the employee take administrative leave with on the assumption of innocence. The DES should be immediately informed.

Confidentiality

All information/details received by the Board of Management in relation to a Child Protection issue must be dealt with in the strictest confidence by all board members.

Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse

The protection for persons reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse ‘reasonably and in good faith’ to designated officers of Health Boards or any member of an Garda Síochána.

Qualified Privilege

People making a report to the DLP in good faith have ‘qualified privilege’ under common law, see ‘Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures’ (DES 2001, page 6).

Reports made to Health Boards may be subject to provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, 1997. This act enables members of the public to obtain access to personal information relating to them which is in the possession of public bodies. However, the act also provides that public bodies may refuse access to information obtained by them in confidence.

Definition and Recognition of child Abuse

The definition and Recognition of Child Abuse is set out in Chapter 2 of the Child Protection Procedures, 2017 and includes the following:

- Neglect
- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Bullying

Handling Disclosures from Children

Chapter 3, section 3.3 gives comprehensive details of how disclosures should be approached. Staff are advised to deal with each situation sensitively, reassure the child but not to make promises that cannot be fulfilled. The adult should not ask leading questions or make suggestions. They should explain that further help may have to be sought. The discussion should then be recorded accurately. It is important to deal with allegation of abuse or neglect in a sensitive way through listening and facilitating rather than interviewing the child about the details of what happened. Disclosures of abuse must be dealt with sensitively and professionally. It must always be remembered that the school personnel have a supportive role rather than an investigative role. Best practice for handling disclosures from children are set out in Chapter 3, section 3.3.3. of the Child Protection Procedures, 2017.

School Measures Taken to Protect and Children in Our Care

There are a number of areas where common sense in our school should prevail in order to protect the children in the school and the staff who care for them. In relation to this, certain points should be noted:

1. Park National School will fully implement the Stay Safe programme
2. 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 personnel and is readily accessible to parents on request.
3. The name of the DLP, DDLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are displayed in a prominent position near the main entrance to the school.
4. In addition to informing the school authority of those cases where a report involving a child in the school has been submitted to Tusla the DLP shall also inform the school authority of cases where the DLP sought advice from Tusla and as a result of this advice, no report was made. At each BOM meeting, the Principal’s report shall include the Child Protection Oversight Report
5. Park National School will undertake an annual review of its Child Safeguarding Statement and its implementation by the school. Template 3 (Checklist for review of the Child Safeguarding Statement) must be used for this purpose. The Board of Management shall make arrangements to inform school personnel that the review has been undertaken. Written notification that the review has been undertaken shall be provided to the parents (P.A.) and school Patron and if requested, to the DES.

6. Best Practice:

- a. Staff who take classes swimming should make sure that there are two adults in attendance at all times. The dressing rooms and pool area should be well supervised.
- b. When possible children should work in groups
- c. Children with physical disabilities who may require assistance in toiletry matters will be aided by a Special Needs Assistant who has met the necessary vetting requirements when being employed by the school. It should be noted that children with disabilities may be more a risk of abuse due to a number of reasons (see list outlined on page 99 of 'Children First Guidelines'). Parents, teachers and all staff involved in services for children with disabilities need to be familiar with the indicators of abuse and to be alert for signs of abuse.
- d. All employees and personnel working with children in the school must meet current vetting requirements

Appendix 1: 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. The BOM may wish to include other items in the checklist that are of particular relevance to Park National School and reserve the right to do so if/when the need occurs.

1.	As part of the overall review process, Boards of Management should also assess other school policies, practices and activities vis a vis their adherence to the principles of best practice in child protection and welfare as set out in the school's Child Protection Policy.	Yes	No
2.	Has the Board formally adopted a child protection policy in accordance with the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	Yes	No
3.	As part of the school's child protection policy, has the Board formally adopted, without modification, the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	Yes	No
4.	Are there both a DLP and a Deputy DLP currently appointed?	Yes	No
5.	Are the relevant contact details (Tusla and An Garda Síochána) to hand	Yes	No
6.	Has the DLP attended available child protection training?	Yes	NO
7.	Has the Deputy DLP attended available child protection training?	Yes	No
8.	Have any members of the Board attended child protection training?	Yes	No
9.	Has the school's child protection policy identified other school policies, practices and activities that are regarded as having particular child protection relevance?	Yes	No
10.	Has the Board ensured that the 'Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary School's' are available to all school personnel?	Yes	No
11.	Does the Board have arrangements in place to communicate the school's child protection policy to new school personnel?	Yes	No
12.	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 School's'?	Yes	No
13.	Since the Board's last annual review, was the Board informed of any child protection report made to the Tusla/An Garda Síochána by the DLP	Yes	No
14.	Since the Board's last annual review, was the Board informed of any cases where the DLP sought advice for the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report to the Tusla was made?	Yes	No
15.	Is the Board satisfied that the child protection procedures in relation to the making of reports to the Tusla/An Garda Síochána were appropriately followed	Yes	No
16.	Were child protection matters reported to the Board appropriately recorded in the Board minutes?	Yes	No
17.	Is the Board satisfied that all records relating to child protection are appropriately filed and stored securely?	Yes	No
18.	Has the Board ensured that the Parents' Association has been provided with the school's child protection policy?	Yes	No

Child Protection Practices

The Staff and BOM of this school have identified the following as areas of specific concern in relation to Child Protection. Following discussion and consultation, the staff and BOM have agreed that the following practices be adopted:

1. Physical contact between school personnel and the child should always be in response to the needs of the child and not the needs of the adult

While physical contact may be used to comfort, reassure or assist a child, the following should be factors in determining its appropriateness:

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

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

School personnel should never engage in or allow:

1. The use of inappropriate language or behaviour
2. Physical punishment of any kind
3. Sexually provocative game or suggestive comments about or to a child
4. The use of sexually explicit or pornographic material.

All media products (CD's, DVD's etc... should be in line with child protection requirements.

Visitors/Guest Speakers

Vetted guest speakers and visiting teachers of varying disciplines, employed by the BOM of Park National School to perform specific duties, will not be left to work with a class alone as the class teacher will remain present.

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 is appropriate.

Children with specific toileting/intimate care needs

1. In all situations where a pupil needs assistance with toileting/intimate care, a meeting will be convened, after enrolment and before the child starts school, between parents/guardians, class teacher, special needs assistant, Principal and if appropriate the pupil. The purpose of the meeting will be to ascertain the specific needs of the child and to determine how the school can best meet those needs.
2. The staff to be involved in this care will be identified and provision will be made for occasions when the particular staff involved are absent. A written copy of what has been agreed will be made and kept in the child's file.
3. 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 DLP and the parents/guardians.

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 the Principal and parents will be notified.

Accidents

While every precaution will be taken under our Health and Safety Statement to ensure the safety of children, we realise that accidents will happen. Accidents will be noted in our Incident book and will be addressed under our Accident Policy as part of Health and Safety.

One-to-One teaching

1. It is the policy in this school that one-to-one teaching may often be in the best interest of some children.

2. Every effort will be made to ensure that this teaching takes place in an open environment.
3. Parents of children who are to be involved in one-to-one teaching will be informed and their agreement sought.
4. Work being carried out by Special Needs Assistants will be carried out under the direction of the class teacher in an open environment.

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 area 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 parents/guardians of the child will be asked to assist the child.

At all times there must be adequate supervision of pupils.

Attendance

Our school attendance will be monitored as per our attendance policy. With regards to child protection, we will pay particular attention to trends in non-attendance. We will also monitor non-attendance in correlation with signs of neglect/physical/emotional abuse. We will follow legislative requirements in relation to reporting attendance to Tusla.

Behaviour

Children are encouraged at all times to play co-operatively and inappropriate behaviour will be addressed under our Code of Behaviour. If an incident occurs which we consider to be of a sexualised nature we will notify the DLP who will record it and respond to it appropriately.

Bullying

Bullying behaviour will be addressed under our Ant-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. Issues in relation to bullying under child protection concerns will be addressed in the Child Protection Oversight Report.

Communication

Every effort will be made to enhance pupil-teacher communication. If pupils have concerns they will be listened to sympathetically. The SPHE/Oral Language/RE programmes allow for open pupil-teacher communication, which is hoped will aid the pupil-teacher relationship. If teachers have to communicate with pupils on a one-to-one basis, they are advised to leave the classroom door open or request a colleague to attend.

Induction of Staff

The DLP will be responsible for informing all new teachers and ancillary staff of the Child Protection Procedures, 2017. The DLP will give a copy of the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, 2017, to all new staff. All teachers are expected to teach the designated SPHE objectives for their class.

Induction of Pupils

All parents and children will be made aware of attendance rules and their implications as laid down in the Education Welfare Act (2000). All parents will be informed of the programmes in place in the school that deal with personal development e.g. RSE, Walk Tall, Stay Safe and SPHE. All new parents will be given a copy of the school's enrolment policy, which outlines the procedures parents and children should use when contacting the school if there is absence or concerns of an educational/personal/family matter. Parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the class teacher/principal if they wish to discuss their child's progress. All parents will be given a copy of the school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-bullying policies.

Internet Safety

It is the intention of the Principal and Staff at Park National School to ensure that child protection concerns will be addressed in the school's Acceptable Use Policy as part of its Information and Communication Technology policy. The Stay Safe lessons in each classroom will be supplemented with a lesson from the Web-wise resource pack recently made available to schools.

Supervision

The school's supervision policy will be followed by all staff to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children at all breaks. A rota will be displayed to cover 11 O'clock and lunchtime breaks. See Supervision Policy for agreed rules around break-times and procedures around teacher absences.

Visibility

Teachers will ensure that children are visible in the school playground. Children will not be allowed to spend time in classrooms, toilets or sheds where they would not be under adult supervision. They are not to leave the school playground or to engage with adult who are outside of the school playground.

Ratification of Policy

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management in Term 1, 2024

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management
on...14/02/2023.....

Chairperson: Patrick Curran

Principal : Karen Hennessy

Appendix C

Dear Parents/Guardians

In recent years, as a society, we have become very aware of the problem of child abuse through neglect, emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

Each one of us has a duty to protect children and Children First, the National Guidelines, for the Protection and Welfare of Children noted that teachers, who are the main care givers to children outside the family, are particularly well placed to observe and monitor children for signs of abuse.

In response to this, the Department of Education and Skills published Child Protection Procedures for all schools in relation to child protection and welfare. These procedures promote the safety and welfare of all children and are to be welcomed.

The Board of Management of Park National School has adopted these procedures as school policy. Consequently, if school staff suspect or are alerted to possible child abuse, they are obliged to refer this matter to Tusla. Tusla will then assess the situation and provide support for the child concerned.

Child Protection Procedures, 2017 may be accessed though the Department of Education and Skills website (Education.ie). Tusla's website is www.tusla.ie.

Yours Sincerely,

Principal

