

**Rathbarry National School**

**Child Protection Policy**

*Reviewed 05/10/2023*



In Rathbarry National School full compliance with the law as prescribed in the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures (2001) and Children First guidelines (2015) will underpin practice, in any case where we suspect, or are alerted to, child abuse, including where a child discloses abuse.

This child protection policy has been developed in consultation with representatives of the Board of Management, teaching and ancillary staff and parent(s)/guardian(s). It is based on previous policies from 2002 and following the updated D.E. Guidelines and Procedures on Children First in 2011 and again in 2015.

**The guidelines are laid out as follows:**

- 1.0 Appointment of a Designated Liaison Person (D.L.P.)
- 2.0 Roles, Responsibilities and Guidelines
  - 2.1 Role of the Board of Management
  - 2.2 Role of the Staff Members (Teachers, S.N.A.s, Caretaker, Secretary)
  - 2.3 Role of the Designated Liaison Person (D.L.P.)
- 3.0 Child Protection Meetings/Case Conferences
- 4.0 Organisational Implications
- 5.0 Curriculum Implications

**1.0 Appointment of a Designated Liaison Person (D.L.P.)**

- a. The Board of Management has appointed Catherine Foley (Principal) as the *Designated Liaison Person (DLP)* in Rathbarry N.S. to have specific responsibility for child protection.
- b. Aoife Hourihane has been appointed as Deputy DLP to take the place of the DLP if she is unavailable.
- c. The position of DLP will be addressed at the first meeting of each new Board of Management. The DLP will continue to act as such until such time as she is replaced by the Board.

## **2.0 Roles and Responsibilities:**

- The Board of Management of Rathbarry National School has primary responsibility to protect the children within the school to whom they have a duty of care.
- The DLP has specific responsibility for child protection in the school.
- All staff have a general duty of care to ensure that arrangements are in place to protect children from harm.

### **2.1 Role of the Board of Management**

The responsibilities of the Board of Management outlined in the 2015 Children First Guidelines and the 2023 Child Protection Procedures (<https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/d7be05-child-protection/>) are as follows:

- a. To arrange for the planning, development and implementation of an effective child protection programme e.g. Stay Safe Programme (Talking to strangers, Lost, Bullying, Friendships, Relationship, Touches, Secrets and Tales)
- b. To monitor and evaluate its effectiveness.
- c. To provide appropriate staff development and training.
  - o Catherine Foley and Aoife Hourihane completed 'Introduction to Children First' E-Learning Programme in October 2023 delivered by Tusla – Child and Family Agency.

Specifically the B.O.M. will:

- d. Appoint a Designated Liaison Person and a deputy Designated Liaison Person
- e. Have clear procedures for dealing with allegations or suspicions of child abuse (See below)
- f. Endeavour to prevent child abuse
- g. Monitor the progress of children at risk
- h. Ensure that curricular provision is in place for the prevention of child abuse.
- i. Investigate and respond to allegations/suspicions of child abuse involving school's employees which have been reported to the Tusla – Child and Family Agency or Gardaí.
- j. Invoke administrative leave of employee if the nature of the allegation warrants immediate action
- k. To decide on teachers attendance at child protection meetings/case conferences and to advise teachers before attending such meetings/conferences.

- l. Monitor and evaluate the programme and policy
- m. Garda Vetting

**Procedures for B.O.M. in cases of allegations or suspicions of child abuse by a school employee:**

**A. Reporting**

In the event of receiving a complaint or suspicion re an employee the DLP will immediately:

- i. Inform the chairperson.
- ii. Take a written statement of the allegation from the person/agency making the it. Parent(s)/guardian(s) may make a statement on behalf of a child.
- iii. The DLP will seek advice from Tusla and will take responsibility for reporting, based on this advice.
- iv. If the DLP, following consultation with the Tusla, decides that this matter is not for reporting, they must inform the Chairperson. They must then inform, in writing, the person or agency making the allegation, of the reasons for this decision. If this person or agency still has concerns, they are free to consult with or report to Tusla or Gardaí on an individual basis. The provisions of the Protection for Persons reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 apply, once they report reasonably and in good faith.
- v. If the DLP, following consultation with Tusla, decides that this matter is for reporting he/she should inform the Chairperson, who should proceed in accordance with the procedures in the Child Protection Guidelines (pg.16).
- vi. The DLP/Deputy DLP completes a standard reporting form as comprehensively as is possible.
- vii. When the Chairperson becomes aware of an allegation of abuse he/she will always seek legal advice and base any subsequent response on this advice.
- viii. He/she will privately inform the employee of the fact and nature of the allegation and whether or not it has been reported by the DLP to Tusla. The chairperson has a duty to afford the employee fairness and due process – s/he is entitled to details and a copy of the written allegation, to advice and representation and an opportunity to respond to the Board within a week.

**B. Responding**

When the Chairperson becomes aware of an allegation of abuse he/she will be obliged to, without exception:

- i. Seek legal advice and base her response on this advice.
- ii. The Chairperson will consider whether there is any risk to pupils' safety. If the Chairperson considers that there is a risk – they may require the employee to take immediate administrative leave. If unsure the chairperson will consult with the Tusla /Gardaí.
- iii. If administrative leave has been invoked, the chairperson will inform the D.E.S. Tusla (in some cases the Gardaí) may also be notified in accordance with legal advice received.
- iv. Once it is deemed necessary by the DLP and Chairperson to make a report (after receiving advice from Tusla) the Chairperson will convene and inform a meeting of the B.O.M. as soon as possible.
- v. 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 will investigate the matter. They will convene a further meeting, once the relevant information has been gathered. At this meeting the Board will consider in detail
  - the allegations made and their source
  - the advice given by relevant authorities
  - and the written responses of the employee.
- vi. At this meeting also
  - the person/agency who is alleging abuse by the school employee should be offered an opportunity to present his/her case to the B.O.M. and may be accompanied by another person
  - Parent(s)/guardian(s) may act on behalf of child.
  - The employee should also be afforded an opportunity to present their case and may also be accompanied.
- vii. The Board must deal with the matter sensitively and the employee must be fairly treated.
- viii. The Board will make a decision on action, if any, based on their investigation and will inform the employee of this in writing. They will also inform the DES of the outcome, if the employee has been absent on administrative leave.
- ix. Where it is not possible for the Board to conduct an enquiry into allegations (e.g. where abuse has occurred in past employment, or where the employee is undergoing investigation by relevant authorities), the Chairperson will act on the advice of authorities. The Chairperson will maintain close contact with Tusla and receive reports and records from them where appropriate.

### **2.2.2. Role of the Staff Member (to include Teachers, SNA's, Caretaker, Secretary etc)**

The responsibilities of the staff of Rathbarry National School are as outlined in the Children First Guidelines and the Child Protection Procedures:

**a. It is the responsibility of all teachers and staff members to familiarise themselves with the *Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2015)* especially:**

- Chapter 2 Definition & Recognition of Child Abuse  
Pgs. 8-12
- Chapter 3 Basis for Reporting & Standard Reporting Procedures  
Pgs. 13 - 17

**b. Guidelines for teachers and staff members in handling...**

**1. Disclosures from children**

**a. *Where a child discloses alleged abuse to a staff member, the person receiving that information should listen carefully and supportively. Great care must be taken not to abuse the child's trust. This should not be a formal interview. The follow advice is offered:***

- Listen to the child.
- 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.
- **Confidentiality should not be assured** - explain that further help may have to be sought.
- Record the discussion accurately noting
  - *What, where and when?*
  - *Descriptions and possible sketches of physical injuries.*
  - *Explanations of injuries using direct quotations if appropriate.*
- Retain the record securely.

- b. The staff member should obtain only necessary relevant facts. It is not the responsibility of school personnel to investigate allegations of abuse.
- c. The D.L.P. should then be informed and given relevant records.
- d. If the suspected abuser is the D.L.P. then the suspicion and any records will be passed on to the Chairperson who will proceed as per guidelines.

## **2. Suspicions of Abuse:**

- a. Staff members who suspect abuse should refer to *Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2015)* especially;
  - Chapter 2 : Definition & Recognition of Child Abuse  
p. 5 - 17
  - Chapter 3: Mandated Persons (Basis for Reporting and Standard Reporting Procedures)  
p. 18 - 28
- b. Staff members should observe and record over time the dates/signs/symptoms/behaviour causing them concern.
- c. They should inform the DLP and pass on all records.

### **2.3. Role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP)**

- a. The DLP acts as a liaison with outside agencies, Tusla, Gardaí and other parties with child protection concerns
- b. The DLP will inform all school personnel of the availability of the Children First Guidelines in the school. She will photocopy and circulate to all staff Chapters 2 & 3 of these guidelines and advise on good practice
- c. The DLP will be available to staff for consultation regarding suspicions or disclosures of abuse. She will keep records of these consultations.
- d. The DLP will seek advice from the Tusla
- e. The DLP will report suspicions and allegations of child abuse to Tusla or/ and Garda Síochána based on this advice.
- f. The DLP will maintain proper records in a secure, confidential manner and in a secure location.

- g. The DLP will keep up to date on current developments regarding child protection and ensure that all staff are aware of the procedures and guidelines and attend any further training, if provided.
- h. The DLP will ensure that each teacher has a copy of this policy on Child Protection.

#### **Guidelines for the D.L.P. in handling reported concerns and disclosures**

- a. Where the DLP /Deputy DLP have concerns about a child, but are not sure whether to report the matter to Tusla, they should seek appropriate advice. To do this the DLP /Deputy DLP should make informal contact with the assigned (on duty) Social Worker. The DLP /Deputy DLP in this case, should be explicit that she is requesting advice and not making a report. If advised to report the matter, the DLP will act on that advice.
- b. A report will then be made to Tusla by the DLP /Deputy DLP in person, by telephone or in writing. In the event of an emergency or non-availability of Tusla staff, the report should be made to the Gardaí. The DLP should also report the matter to the Chairperson of the Board who should then follow the procedures as outlined in Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2015).
- c. A standard reporting form is completed by the DLP /Deputy DLP as comprehensively as possible.
- d. Parent(s)/guardian(s) will normally be informed that a report is being made. It may be decided that informing the parent/carer is likely to endanger the child or place the child at further risk. The decision not to inform the parent/carer should be briefly recorded together with the reasons for not doing so.
- e. If the allegation is against the DLP, the Chairperson assumes responsibility for reporting the matter to Tusla and filling in the standard reporting form.
- f. Where there are allegations or suspicions of Peer Abuse the DLP will follow the same procedures.
  - Parent(s) / guardian(s) of all parties will be notified and the DLP will inform the Chairperson.
  - Principal and class teachers will make arrangements to meet separately with all parent(s)/guardian(s), to resolve the matter.
  - The school will make arrangements to minimise the possibility of the abusive behaviour recurring.

### **3.0 CHILD PROTECTION MEETINGS (Case Conferences):**

- a. A request is made from Tusla through the DLP who should consult with the Chairperson of the Board of the school. The Chairperson may seek clarification through the DLP as to why the attendance of the school employee is necessary and ascertain who else will be present.
- b. The school employee may complete a report for the meeting/conference.
- c. The school employee will be advised if children/parent(s) /guardian(s) are going to be present. The school employee may contact the Chairperson of the Child Protection Meeting for advice.
- d. The school employee may keep a child's behaviour under closer observation, if requested to do so. This may include observing the child's behaviour, peer interactions, school progress or informal conversations.
- e. In all cases, individuals who refer or discuss their concerns about the care and protection of children with Tusla staff, should be informed of the likely steps to be taken by the professionals involved. Where appropriate and within the normal limits of confidentiality, reporting staff will be kept informed about the outcomes of any enquiry or investigation following on from their report

### **4.0 Organisational Implications**

School procedures already in place and new procedures being put in place will be examined with reference to the Children First Guidelines and any Child Protection issues that may arise will be address.

The following policy areas have been addressed in this review:

*Supervision*

*Bullying*

*Accidents*

*Swimming*

*Record Keeping*

*Children travelling with teacher in car*

*Induction of all New Staff*

*Induction of Pupils*

*Communication*

*Attendance*

#### **Supervision**

School supervision policy will be followed by all staff to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children at all breaks.

See supervision policy for agreed rules around break-times.

See supervision policy for procedures around teacher absences.

#### **Behaviour**





Teachers will keep each child's file updated with results of assessments carried out, dates and details of meetings with parent(s) / guardian(s) and notes from parent(s)/guardian(s). The records are kept in the filing cabinet. Roll books will be updated daily and absence notes filed. Sensitive information regarding children will be shared on a need-to-know basis. All educational files of pupils who no longer attend this school are kept in the filing cabinet in the principal's office and stored for 8 years and child protection records are kept indefinitely. Further details on record keeping are found in the school's Record Keeping Policy.

### **Induction of Teachers and Ancillary Staff**

The DLP will be responsible for informing all new teachers and ancillary staff of the Children First Guidelines (2015). The DLP will give a copy of Chapters 2 & 3 and this Child protection policy to all new staff. All new teachers are expected to teach the objectives in the S.P.H.E. programme. The Principal, Ms. Catherine Foley is responsible for the mentoring of new teachers and will be responsible for supporting new teachers as they implement the S.P.H.E. objectives. The Principal is also responsible for ensuring that new teachers know how to fill in the roll book correctly and informing the teacher of record keeping procedures within the school.

### **Induction of Pupils**

All parent(s)/guardian(s) 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. R.S.E., Walk Tall and S.P.H.E. All new parent(s)/guardian(s) are given a copy of the school's R.S.E. policy, Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) are encouraged to make an appointment with the class teacher/principal if they wish to discuss their child's progress.

### **Communication**

Every effort will be made to enhance pupil-teacher communication. If pupils have concerns they will be listened to sympathetically. The S.P.H.E./Oral English/R.E. 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 requested to leave the classroom door open.

### **Attendance**

Our school attendance will be monitored. 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.

## **5.0 Curriculum Implications**

### Introduction

In Rathbarry National School all children will be cherished and in fulfilling the general aims of the Revised Primary Curriculum, we will:

- *Enable the child to live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential*
- *Enable the child to develop as a social being through living and co-operating with others and so contribute to the good of society*
- *Prepare the child for further education and lifelong learning*

In endeavouring to realise these aims we will create a positive school climate which is open, inclusive, respectful, fair, democratic and tolerant and which seeks to support the holistic development of all children and all adults working with our children. The strategies we will use to create this environment are detailed in our S.P.H.E. Plan and will involve:

- Creating a health-promoting physical environment
- Enhancing self-esteem
- Fostering respect for diversity
- Building effective communication within the school
- Developing appropriate home-school communication
- Catering for individual needs
- Developing democratic process
- Fostering inclusive and respectful language

We strive to ensure that our school will be physically and emotionally safe and we will deliver the curricular content of our S.P.H.E. programme with a view to giving our children the protective skills of self-esteem and assertiveness. The circle time methodology will be used on a whole school basis. Co-operative interpersonal skills will be developed through working in pairs and working in groups. Older children will be encouraged to work positively with conflict and negotiation and consensus building skills developed.

We contribute to the prevention of child abuse through the S.P.H.E. curriculum, particularly through the Strand Unit, "Safety and Protection". The Child Protection Programme that is to be implemented in Rathbarry National School is the Stay Safe Programme. It will be taught from Infants to Sixth Class and will be taught on alternate years and referred to as the need arises. It will be taught in a 5 – 6 week block to maintain the integrity of the Stay Safe programme. Any additional resources selected will be in keeping with the aims of this policy.

In a multi class situation, the younger class will be withdrawn when topics being taught are not age-appropriate.

With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom.

The school cannot guarantee confidentiality if a child asks a question of a personal nature to them or discloses personal information.

All children with special needs are included and participate in the S.P.H.E. programme with their own classes. Teachers will endeavour to adapt and modify activities so that all children can participate. The learning support /resource teacher will supplement the work of the class teachers where necessary.

The methodologies and approaches used will be as recommended in the S.P.H.E. curriculum i.e. active learning, talk and discussion, problem-solving, etc.

The curriculum is available for parent(s)/guardian(s) to view and they may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns.

#### **Junior and Senior Infants, 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> classes**

The teacher will teach content objectives as laid out under the 10 strand units in our SPHE programme. They are:

- Self Identity
- Taking care of my body
- Growing and changing
- Safety and protection
- Making decisions
- Myself and my family
- My friends and other people
- Relating to others
- Developing citizenship

After discussion teachers felt that these strand units would enable children to develop assertiveness, body integrity, skills relating to self-care and disclosure, respect for others, identification of feelings and skills necessary to recognise and tell of abuse, knowledge and attitudes pertaining to self-esteem, esteem for others and the environment. Healthy eating, positive attitudes to drug use and anti-bullying awareness will be introduced.

The S.P.H.E. programme would be supported, using the Walk Tall resources, our Grow in Love programme, North Western Health Board materials and Stay Safe resources.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> classes, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes**

Our S.P.H.E. programme will again be implemented according to the 10 strand units. Knowledge, skills and attitudes developed in previous classes will be built on. Children will be enabled to develop intra-personal skills and inter-personal skills. Children will continue to develop self-awareness and positive attitudes to themselves, others, their environment and wider world in which they live. Self protection and respect for others will be fostered, decision-making skills developed, peer influence and media bias examined. As children mature they will be challenged to develop their decision-making skills. They will be encouraged to develop self-protection skills pertaining to smoking and alcohol. Peer pressure and the influence of the media will also be examined. The development of self-esteem, esteem for others, assertiveness, awareness of feelings, and skills around self-protection and disclosure will underpin our teaching. Knowledge of drugs and positive attitudes to drug use will be further developed. Children will be enabled to develop good group-building skills, anti-bullying awareness and conflict resolution skills. Self-protection will be emphasised and protection of younger, less able people. It is our aim to enable our pupils to understand and develop healthy attitudes and values towards their sexuality and that of others, in a moral, spiritual and social framework. Positive attitudes to sexuality in general will be developed and respect for self and others fostered (see R.S.E. policy).

Our S.P.H.E. programme will be supported by the use of Walk Tall resources, R.S.E. materials, North Western Health Board resources and Stay Safe programme.

#### **Provision for Ongoing Support**

Provisions to be made to support teachers, pupils, parent(s) / guardian(s) and board members involved in Child Protection at policy and programme level include

- ❖ Staff and B.O.M. will attend training in relation to Child Protection when provided
- ❖ Provision of the Parent's Guide to Stay Safe.

#### **Policies that Support Child Protection**

The following policies related to Child Protection have been drawn up in consultation with parent(s)/ guardian(s), the Board of Management and other interested parties in the local community:

- ❖ Code of Behaviour
- ❖ Enrolment

- ❖ Anti Bullying
- ❖ Health and Safety Statement
- ❖ S.E.N.
- ❖ R.S.E.
- ❖ Substance Use Policy

#### **Success Criteria.**

**We will evaluate the success of this policy using the following criteria:**

- ❖ Delivery and participation by all staff in training
- ❖ Delivery of the S.P.H.E. curriculum
- ❖ Resources to support the delivery of S.P.H.E.
- ❖ Delivery and participation by children in the Stay Safe Programme
- ❖ Assessment of these procedures by participants following a child protection case
- ❖ Feedback from all staff

#### **Timeframe for Implementation and Review**

At the first staff meeting of every year the D.L.P. will remind all teachers of the guidelines and copies of Chapter 2 & 3 of The Children First Guidelines will be given to those who require them.

A review will be conducted based on the criteria above, following any and all incidents when the guidelines are used.

These procedures will guide the school community for the duration of the current Board's term of office and will be reviewed by the incoming Board in 2023/2024.


#### **Responsibility for Review**

Board of Management in partnership with the Principal, staff and the parents.

#### **Ratification and Communication**

This policy was adopted by the Board at the first meeting of the 2023 school year. It will be reviewed regularly or if a need arises and/or in line with any change in legislation.

Signed:

  
Chairperson Board of Management

Rathbarry National School

Date: 5/10/23