

Scoil an Teaghlaigh Naofa

Holy Family School



HOLY FAMILY
NATIONAL SCHOOL
HAPPINESS • FULFILMENT • SUCCESS

Plean Scoile

Child Protection Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

The Board of Management of **Holy Family School** value and encourage the participation of pupils in all activities that enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development. The school recognises the dignity and rights of all pupils and is committed to ensuring their protection and support. Management, staff and volunteers accept and recognise our responsibilities both to develop awareness of the practices which cause children harm and to create an environment that safeguards the well-being of all the children that attend the school.

The Child Protection Policy of **Holy Family School** has been developed in accordance with:

- Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, Department of Education & Science, 2001.
- Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Department of Health & Children, 1999.

Queries about Child Protection Procedures in our school should be directed to:

Maria O' Regan, Principal

Allegations or suspicions of child abuse should be brought to the attention of the **Principal Maria O' Regan (DLP), Deputy Principal, Linda Hanafin (DDL),** the local HSE Office and the local Garda Station.

2. BACKGROUND

Child Abuse: Towards a Definition

Holy Family School has adopted the definition of child abuse as described in the 'Children First Guidelines'.

The 'Children First Guidelines', defines child abuse by using 4 categories: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. It should be noted that a child may be subject to more than one form of abuse at any given time.

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, medical care or attachment to and affection from adults. The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that their well-being and/or development are severely affected.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is normally found in the relationship between a care-giver (an adult person who has responsibility for a child in the short or long term) and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's needs for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. It is rarely manifested in terms of physical symptoms. Children show signs of emotional abuse by their behaviour (for example excessive clinginess to or avoidance of the parent or carer), their emotional state (low self-esteem, unhappiness) or their development. The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and parent or carer.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or any injury that results from willful or neglectful failure to protect a child. Examples of physical injury include:

- shaking,
- use of excessive force in handling,
- deliberate poisoning,
- suffocation,
- Munchausen's Syndrome by proxy (where parents make up stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness), or
- allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for their gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others. Examples of sexual abuse include:

- exposing sexual organs or intentionally performing any sexual act in the presence of a child,
- intentional touching or molesting the body of a child, by a person or object, for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification,
- masturbating in the presence of a child or involving the child in the act of masturbation,
- engaging in sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal,
- sexually exploiting a child, or
- consensual sexual activity between an adult and a child under 17 years.

(In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that, for the purposes of criminal law, the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years).

Aggressive/Bullying/Sexualised Behaviour:

While bullying is not a category in itself, it is important to be aware of it in relation to child abuse. Bullying can be defined as repeated verbal, psychological or physical aggression that is conducted by an individual or group against others. It includes behaviour such as teasing, taunting, threatening and hitting.

- In **Holy Family School** peer to peer bullying as described above will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.
- Bullying behaviour that is perpetrated by an adult against a child will be dealt with under the provisions of this policy.

Sexualised behaviour displayed by an individual child, or occurring between children is inappropriate. Should such behaviour occur the school:

- Will arrange meetings (separate meetings if there are children from more than one family implicated) with the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the child/children involved.
- May if deemed appropriate seek advice from the HSE.

In a situation where child abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another child, the child protection procedures will be adhered to for both the victim and the alleged abuser; that is, the matter will be considered a child care and protection issue for both children.

Responsibility to Report Suspected or Actual Abuse

Any person who suspects that a child is being abused or is at risk of abuse, has a responsibility and a duty of care to report their concerns to the Health Service Executive or an Garda Síochána, either directly or through the Designated Liaison Person.

The Protection for *Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998* provides immunity from civil liability to people who report child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to the HSE or the Gardaí.

Persons furnishing information with regard to suspicions of child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to the DLP or Chairperson of the Board of Management are protected under '*Qualified Privilege*' as defined by Common Law.

It is a criminal offence to make a report of child abuse 'knowing the statement to be false'.

The Health Service Executive

The HSE has a range of statutory responsibilities in the area of child welfare, family support, child protection and child care.

Once an allegation of child abuse has been reported to the HSE, it is then a matter for the HSE to decide upon the action, if any, which is necessitated by that report.

In the case of allegations or suspicions of child abuse by school employees the *Children First* guidelines place an onus on the HSE to ensure that arrangements are put in place to provide feedback to the Board of Management in regard to the progress of a child abuse investigation regarding an employee. It is clearly stated in those guidelines that efforts should be made to investigate complaints against employees promptly bearing in mind the serious implications for an innocent employee. The HSE is required to pass on reports and records to the Board of Management and the employee in question where appropriate.

The Board of Management should always be notified of the outcome of investigations. It is the responsibility of the Chairperson of the Board of Management to maintain close contact with the health boards to ensure that the health boards act promptly in cases of alleged abuse involving school employees.

3. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board of Management

The Board of Management of **Holy Family School** acknowledges its responsibilities in respect of child protection to include the following:

- Primary responsibility for the care and welfare of pupils.
- The development and implementation of an effective child protection policy.
- The appointment of a DLP (Maria O' Regan) and DDLP (Linda Hanafin).
- The review and evaluation of the child protection policy and associated procedures.
- The provision of appropriate staff development and training.
- To monitor the progress of children at risk.
- The Investigation of allegations of child abuse against one of the school's employees which have been reported to the Health Service Executive (HSE) or An Garda Síochána.
- To ensure that curriculum provision aimed at the prevention of child abuse is in place.
- The development of a policy on teachers' attendance at child protection meetings/case conferences and the provision of advice to teachers before attending such meetings/conferences.

School Staff & Volunteers

- All staff have a general duty of care to ensure that arrangements are in place to protect children from harm.
- Staff are responsible for adhering to the child protection procedures as detailed in the school's child protection policy.
- Teaching staff are responsible for the delivery of the curriculum aimed at the prevention of child abuse.
- Staff and volunteers are expected to comply with the child protection Code of Good Practice as detailed in this document.
- All school personnel are especially well placed to observe changes in behaviour, failure to develop or outward signs of abuse in children. In situations where school staff or volunteers suspect abuse or have concerns regarding the welfare of a child they are required to act in accordance with the procedures detailed in this document.

Role of the Designated Liaison Person (Maria O' Regan)

- The Designated Liaison Person has specific responsibility for child protection.
- The DLP is the first point of contact within the school regarding suspicions or disclosures of abuse.
- This person is the Designated Liaison Person for the school in all dealings with the HSE, An Garda Síochána and other parties, in connection with allegations of abuse.
- In instances where there are reasonable grounds for a suspicion or allegation of child abuse the DLP is responsible for reporting the matter to the HSE, or in the case of an emergency the Garda Síochána.
- The DLP is responsible for informing the Chairperson of the Board of Management if a report involving a pupil in the school has been submitted to the HSE or Garda Síochána.

Role of the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Linda Hanafin)

- The Deputy Designated Liaison Person is responsible for performing the DLP's responsibilities if *he/she* is unavailable or in *his/her* absence.
- The DDPL of **Holy Family School** is **LINDA HANAFIN**

4. CHILD PROTECTION: CREATING A SAFE & SECURE ENVIRONMENT

Code of Good Practice for, BOM Members, Staff & Volunteers

For the purposes of the Code of Good Practice the term personnel describes anyone who engages with pupils of the school during the school day (including school activities organised outside of school hours or off the school premises), whether as a paid employee or as a volunteer.

General Conduct

- Physical punishment of pupils is not permissible under any circumstances.
- Verbal abuse of pupils, the use of sexual innuendo or telling jokes of a sexual nature in the presence of pupils is never acceptable. Great care should be taken if it is necessary to have a conversation regarding sexual matters with a pupil.
- Being alone with a pupil is not good practice. If a situation arises where it is necessary to be alone with a pupil, another member of staff should be informed immediately, and the room door should remain open for the duration. A diary note that the meeting with the young person took place, including the reasons for it, should be made.
- All pupils must be treated with equal respect; favouritism is not acceptable.
- Personnel should not engage in or tolerate any behaviour – verbal, psychological or physical – that could be construed as bullying or abusive.
- A disproportionate amount of time should not be spent with any particular pupil or group of pupils.
- Under no circumstances should school personnel give alcohol, tobacco or drugs to pupils.

Respect for Physical Integrity

- The physical integrity of pupils must be respected at all times.
- Personnel must not engage in inappropriate physical contact of any kind – including tough physical play, physical reprimand and horseplay (tickling, wrestling). This should not prevent appropriate contact in situations where it is necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of a pupil (for example, where a pupil is distressed).

Respect for Privacy

- The right to privacy of pupils must be respected at all times.
- Particular care regarding privacy must be taken when pupils are in locations such as changing areas, swimming pools, showers and toilets.
- Photographs of pupils must never be taken while they are in changing areas (for example, in a locker room or bathing facility) or toilets.
- Tasks of a personal nature (for example, helping with toileting, washing or changing clothing) should not be done for pupils if they can undertake these tasks themselves.

Meetings with Pupils

- If it is necessary to meet alone with a pupil, such meetings should not be held in an isolated environment. The times and designated locations for meetings should allow for transparency and accountability (for example, be held in rooms with a clear glass panel or window, in buildings where other people are present, and with the door of the room left open).
- Both the length and number of meetings should be limited.
- Parents or guardians should be informed that the meeting(s) took place, except in circumstances where to do so might place the pupil in danger.
- When the need for a visit to the home of a pupil or young person arises, professional boundaries must be observed at all times.

Pupils with Special Needs or Disability

- Pupils with special needs or disability may depend on adults more than other pupils for their care and safety, and so sensitivity and clear communication are particularly important
- Where it is necessary to carry out tasks of a personal nature for a pupil with special needs, this should be done with the full understanding and consent of parents or guardians.
- In carrying out such personal care tasks, sensitivity must be shown to the pupil and the tasks should be undertaken with the utmost discretion.
- Any care task of a personal nature which a pupil or young person can do for themselves should not be undertaken by personnel.
- In an emergency situation where this type of help is required, parents should be fully informed as soon as is reasonably possible.

Vulnerable Pupils

- As especially vulnerable pupils may depend on adults more than other children for their care and safety, sensitivity and clear communication are of utmost importance.
- Workers should be aware that vulnerable pupils may be more likely than other pupils to be bullied or subjected to other forms of abuse, and may also be less clear about physical and emotional boundaries.
- It is particularly important that vulnerable pupils should be carefully listened to, in recognition of the fact that they may have difficulty in expressing their concerns and in order that the importance of what they say is not underestimated.

Handling Disclosures from Pupils

Personnel dealing with disclosures from pupils should act with tact and sensitivity. In particular personnel who find themselves in such a situation should:

- Listen to the pupil
- Not ask leading questions or make suggestions to the pupil
- Offer reassurance but not make promises (e.g. promising not to tell anyone else)
- Not stop a pupil recalling significant events
- Not over react
- Explain that further help may have to be sought
- Record the conversation accurately and retain the record
- Report the matter to the DLP (or to the Chairperson of the BoM if the DLP is implicated)

Maintaining Records

When child abuse is suspected, it is essential to have a record of all the information available. Personnel should note carefully what they have observed and when they observed it. Signs of physical injury should be described in detail and, if appropriate, sketched. Any comment by the child concerned, or by any other person, about how an injury occurred should be recorded, preferably quoting words actually used, as soon as possible after the comment has been made. All records so created should be regarded as highly confidential and retained in a secure location by the Designated Liaison Person.

Vetting of New Employees

The Board of Management undertakes that

- A Garda Vetting Report is requested in respect of all new appointees (permanent, fixed term and substitute).
- Reference checks will be carried out in respect of all new appointees.

Induction of New Employees

- All new employees will be given a copy of this policy.
- The DLP will be responsible for:
 - providing all new teachers and ancillary staff of the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, DES, 2001 and Children First Guidelines, 1999.
 - providing all new staff with a copy of this policy document and discussing their obligations with regard to same.
- All new teachers are expected to teach the designated SPHE objectives for their class.

Supervision

Every effort will be made to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of pupils throughout the school day. A roster of staff on duty will be displayed in the office/staff room. Teachers will ensure that pupils are visible in the schoolyard. Pupils will not be permitted to leave the school yard or engage with adults outside of the schoolyard.

One-to-One Teaching

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will be made aware when one-to-one teaching is deemed to be in the best interest of a pupil. Written consent will be required for all one-to-one teaching.

Attendance

Procedures with regard to the monitoring of school attendance are contained in the school's Code of Behaviour.

Curriculum

The SPHE programme taught by in all classes

Use of Images of Children

- The school undertakes to seek parents' or guardians' permission for the use of photographs of pupils for any publicity purposes.
- At school ceremonies and other public events, the school will publicly announce the use of photographic and audio-visual equipment so that anyone who would rather not be photographed or videoed can remove themselves.
- Only images of pupils in appropriate dress will be used.
- Inappropriate use of images of pupils will be brought to the attention of the DLP.
- No images of any pupil may be taken by an external agency or person without receiving the prior authorisation of the school principal.

Use of Technology

Procedures with regard to the use of technology are contained in the school's Acceptable Usage Policy

INTERNET USER POLICY FOR HOLY FAMILY SCHOOL

The aim of this Acceptable Use Policy is to ensure that pupils will benefit from learning opportunities offered by the school's Internet resources in a safe and effective manner. Internet use and access is considered a school resource and privilege. Therefore, if the school AUP is not adhered to this privilege will be withdrawn and appropriate sanctions – as outlined in the AUP – will be imposed.

It is envisaged that school and parent representatives will revise the AUP annually. Before signing, the AUP should be read carefully to ensure that the conditions of use are accepted and understood.

This version of the AUP was updated in November, 2010 by Mrs. Maria O' Regan (Principal) and the teaching staff of Holy Family School.

School's Strategy

The school employs a number of strategies in order to maximise learning opportunities and reduce risks associated with the Internet. These strategies are as follows:

General

- Internet sessions will always be supervised by a teacher.
- Filtering software and/or equivalent systems will be used in order to minimise the risk of exposure to inappropriate material.
- The school will regularly monitor pupils' Internet usage.
- Students and teachers will be provided with training in the area of Internet safety.
- Uploading and downloading of non-approved software will not be permitted.
- Virus protection software will be used and updated on a regular basis.
- The use of personal storage media in school requires a teacher's permission.
- Students will treat others with respect at all times and will not undertake any actions that may bring the school into disrepute.

World Wide Web

- Students will not intentionally visit Internet sites that contain obscene, illegal, hateful or otherwise objectionable materials.
- Students will report accidental accessing of inappropriate materials in accordance with school procedures.
- Students will use the Internet for educational purposes only.
- Students will not copy information into assignments and fail to acknowledge the source (plagiarism and copyright infringement).
- Students will never disclose or publicise personal information.
- Downloading materials or images not relevant to their studies, is in direct breach of the school's acceptable use policy.
- Students will be aware that any usage, including distributing or receiving information, school-related or personal, may be monitored for unusual activity, security and/or network management reasons.

Email

- Students will use approved class email accounts under supervision by or permission from a teacher.
- Students will not send or receive any material that is illegal, obscene, defamatory or that is intended to annoy or intimidate another person.
- Students will not reveal their own or other people's personal details, such as addresses or telephone numbers or pictures.
- Students will never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they only know through emails or the internet.
- Students will note that sending and receiving email attachments is subject to permission from their teacher.
- Internet Chat
- Students will only have access to chat rooms, discussion forums, messaging or other electronic communication fora that have been approved by the school.
- Chat rooms, discussion forums and other electronic communication forums will only be used for educational purposes and will always be supervised.
- Usernames will be used to avoid disclosure of identity.
- Face-to-face meetings with someone organised via Internet chat will be forbidden.

School Website

- Pupils will be given the opportunity to publish projects, artwork or school work on the World Wide Web in accordance with clear policies and approval processes regarding the content that can be loaded to the school's website
- The website will be regularly checked to ensure that there is no content that compromises the safety of pupils or staff.
- Website using facilities such as guest books, notice boards or weblogs will be checked frequently to ensure that they do not contain personal details?
- The publication of student work will be co-ordinated by a teacher.
- Pupils' work will appear in an educational context on Web pages with a copyright notice prohibiting the copying of such work without express written permission.
- The school will endeavour to use digital photographs, audio or video clips focusing on group activities. Content focusing on individual students will not be published on the school website without the parental permission. Video clips may be password protected.
- Personal pupil information including home address and contact details will be omitted from school web pages.
- The school website will avoid publishing the first name and last name of individuals in a photograph.
- The school will ensure that the image files are appropriately named – will not use pupils' names in image file names or ALT tags if published on the web.
- Pupils will continue to own the copyright on any work published.

Mobile Phones

The use of a **mobile phone** by students is in direct breach of the school's acceptable use policy. Any student found in possession of a mobile phone will have the phone confiscated by the principal. The mobile phone will be returned to the parents on receipt of a €20 fine.

Legislation

The school will provide information on the following legislation relating to use of the Internet which teachers, students and parents should familiarise themselves with:

- Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003
- Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998
- Interception Act 1993
- Video Recordings Act 1989
- The Data Protection Act 1988

Support Structures

The school will inform students and parents of key support structures and organisations that deal with illegal material or harmful use of the Internet.

Sanctions

Misuse of the Internet may result in disciplinary action, including written warnings, withdrawal of access privileges and, in extreme cases, suspension or expulsion. The school also reserves the right to report any illegal activities to the appropriate authorities.

HOLY FAMILY SCHOOL Permission Form

Please review the attached school Internet Acceptable Use Policy, sign and return this permission form to the class teacher.

Name of Pupil: _____

Class/Year: _____

Pupil

I agree to follow the school's Acceptable Use Policy on the use of the Internet. I will use the Internet in a responsible way and obey all the rules explained to me by the school.

Pupil's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Parent/Guardian

As the parent or legal guardian of the above pupil, I have read the Acceptable Use Policy and grant permission for my son or daughter or the child in my care to access the Internet. I understand that Internet access is intended for educational purposes. I also understand that every reasonable precaution has been taken by the school to provide for online safety but the school cannot be held responsible if pupils access unsuitable websites.

I accept the above paragraph **I do not accept the above paragraph**

(Please tick as appropriate)

In relation to the school website, I accept that, if the school considers it appropriate, my child's schoolwork may be chosen for inclusion on the website. I understand and accept the terms of the Acceptable Use Policy relating to publishing children's work on the school website.

I accept the above paragraph **I do not accept the above paragraph**

(Please tick as appropriate)

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Mobile Phones

It is recognized that mobile phones can be intrusive and distracting in all situations and particularly in schools. In addition to the inconvenience, the debate still goes on about the possible harmful effects of the frequent use of mobile phones.

Holy Family School have banned the use of mobile phones among pupils. A child found in possession of a mobile phone will have the phone confiscated and a fine of €20 will have to be paid for its return. A second offence will mean permanent confiscation of the phone

School Visitors

Procedures with regard to school visitors are contained in the School Visitors Policy.

AIMS

The aim of this policy is to provide guidelines for all visitors to the school and in so doing;

- Provide a safe and secure environment for our students and staff.
- Establish protocols and procedures that effectively monitor and manage visitors, whilst not compromising the open and inviting nature of the school.

DEFINITIONS

Visitors to the school are defined as all people other than staff members, students, and parents/guardians involved in the task of delivering or collecting children at the start or end of the school day.

Type of Visitor

1. Parents
2. Department of Education & Science Officials
3. Guest Speakers
4. Paid coaches and instructors
5. Volunteers (parents, sport coaches, etc.)
6. Contractors

RESPONSIBILITIES

The school principal shall have the authority to determine which visits are permitted as well as the discretion to set any appropriate conditions on the nature and extent of such visits. In exercising this discretion, the principal shall consider the purpose of the visit, the impact of the visitors presence and the relationship of any visitor to the students.

School personnel shall seek to assure that parents and other visitors are courteously received and that sincere efforts are made to provide them with the information as may be needed to foster a cooperative relationship between home, school and community.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR VISITORS

1. All visitors shall report to the school office when arriving or leaving the school premises. Whenever possible, visitors should obtain authorisation from the principal in advance. At the discretion of the principal, such prior authorisation may be required.
2. Visits may be prohibited at certain times such as the first and last weeks of school, immediately before or after school holidays or other breaks and while preparations for school events are being conducted.
3. All school visitors must comply at all times with Board of Management and Department of Education & Skills policies, administrative rules and school regulations.

Parents as Visitors

- Parents wishing to meet with teachers or administrators during the course of the school day are encouraged to make appointments in advance.
- Parents who visit the premises during the school day to collect students for external appointments are asked to report to the school office to collect their child .

Guest Speakers

- Guest speakers may be invited to the school where the principal's authorisation has been sought and where it has been deemed that the use of such a speaker will bring specific knowledge and expertise to enrich the planned curriculum.
- A check list for the organisation of guest speakers is appended to this document.
- Guest Speakers on subjects/areas other than the approved curriculum must be approved by the Board of Management prior to being invited to the school.

Paid Coaches & Instructors

- Will work under the supervision of a designated teacher.
- Should have a recognized qualification in the activity they are to deliver.
- Must receive Child Protection training.
- Must submit a Garda Vetting report.
- Should have appropriate experience of working with young people.
- Must provide the names and contact details for two character referees.
- Must have current public liability insurance.

Volunteers

- Volunteers who will be on the premises during school hours must submit a Garda clearance form.
- Volunteers will only work directly alongside a member of the school staff.

Contractors

- Contractors who may regularly have staff on the premises during the school day will be required to provide Garda clearance reports for same.
- Contractors who may occasionally visit the premises during the school day must be accompanied by a member of staff at all times.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Both custodial and non-custodial parents of a Holy Family School student have rights to visit the child's school unless a court order exists restricting such contact. In the event that a non-custodial parent seeks permission to visit, the school shall make every effort to notify the custodial parent in advance of the visit.

The principal has the authority to exclude from the school premises any person who disrupts or who appears likely to become a disruption to the educational program. Any such individual shall be directed to leave the school premises immediately and law enforcement authorities shall be called if necessary.

APPENDIX

GUEST SPEAKER CHECK LIST

This checklist will be used by staff in school to support them through the stages of involving a visitor in the classroom.

Before the visit

- Why is this visitor being asked into school?
- Does the visitor come with any recommendations?
- Has the school used this visitor before?
- What experience has this visitor of working with this age group?
- Have parents been informed of the session (if appropriate)?
- How will you ensure that pupils are hearing a balance of opinions about the topic/issue?
- Has the visitor submitted A Garda clearance report?

Preparing the visitor

- Is the visitor aware of the context of the contributions they have been asked to make?
- Has the visitor identified the intended learning outcomes for their input?
- Have the resources and materials been reviewed for appropriateness and the maturity of the pupils?
- Is the visitor aware of the aims of their visit?
- Has the visitor been made aware of the school ethos?

- Is the visitor aware of the ability and maturity level of the young people they will be working with?
- Will the visitor make a pre-visit to the school?
- Are the school's legal responsibilities to the children and young people being met?
- Has the visitor been supplied with copies of the relevant school policies?
- Is the visitor aware of any risks to health and safety?

Preparing the visit

- What arrangements will be made to welcome the visitor to the school and introduce them to the class?
- Is the size of the group appropriate to the activity and learning purpose?
- Is this visit part of a planned programme with preparation beforehand and follow up afterwards?
- How will the group be prepared for the visitor?
- What resources will be needed for the session?

During the visit

- Will the school be able to respond appropriately to questions or incidents that may arise after the visitor has left?
- How will the teacher support the visitor in this work?
- Will a member of the school staff be present during the session?

After the visit

- How will the outcome of the evaluation inform future work?
- Is there opportunity for feedback and discussion about the impact of the visitor's session?

Evaluation

The teacher and visitor will ensure that time has been agreed to jointly evaluate the session. The following questions can be used as prompts:

- What was the young people's response to the session(s)?
- Have the learning outcomes been achieved?
- What went particularly well in the session(s)?
- Which parts (if any) of the session were not successful?
- Were the resources and materials used appropriate?
- In what ways do you think that the session(s) could be improved?
- Are there any issues from this session that you think need addressing further?

Pupil evaluations will be carried out to inform future planning and will focus upon:

- What pupils have learnt in the sessions;
- What they like about the sessions;
- What they didn't like about the sessions;
- What else they would like to know about.

Travel

Best practice in relation to travel with pupils will be observed. Personnel will not undertake any car or minibus journey alone with a pupil. If, in certain circumstances, only one adult is available, there should be a minimum of two pupils present for the entire journey. In the event of an emergency, where it is necessary to make a journey alone with a pupil, a record of this will be made and the pupil's parent(s) or guardian(s) will be informed as soon as is possible.

School Tours

- All trips, including day trips and overnight stays, will be carefully planned in advance, to include adequate provision for safety in regard to transport, facilities, activities and emergencies. Adequate insurance will be put in place.
- Written consent by a parent or guardian specifically for each trip and related activities will be obtained in advance.
- A copy of the itinerary and contact telephone numbers will be made available to parents and guardians.
- There will be adequate, gender-appropriate, supervision for boys and girls.
- Arrangements and procedures will be put in place to ensure that rules and appropriate boundaries are maintained in the relaxed environment of trips away.

6. REPORTING CASES OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

Action to be taken by School Personnel

- If a school employee receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a pupil is being abused the school employee will, in the first instance, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person.

Action to be taken by the Designated Liaison Person

- If the school employee and the Designated Liaison Person are satisfied that there are **reasonable grounds** for the suspicion or allegation the Designated Liaison Person will report the matter to the HSE immediately.

Reasonable Grounds

The following examples are quoted in *Children First Guidelines* as constituting reasonable grounds for concern:

- Specific information from the child that he/she was abused;
- An account by a person who saw the child being abused;
- Evidence, such as 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 is a case of abuse e.g. a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour; and
- Consistent evidence, over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect. A suspicion, which is not supported by any objective indication of abuse or neglect, would not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern in the first instance.

- The DLP will make every attempt to make personal contact with the duty social worker but in any event such a report will be made to the HSE in writing.
 - In the event of an emergency, or the non-availability of HSE staff, the report will be made to An Garda Síochána.
 - When a report is being made to the HSE or An Garda Síochána, the Chairperson of the Board of Management of the school will be informed.
 - When a report is being made to the HSE or An Garda Síochána, the DLP will inform a parent/guardian unless doing so is likely to endanger the pupil or place the pupil at further risk. A decision not to inform a parent/guardian will be recorded together with the reasons for not doing so.
- In cases where school personnel have concerns about a child, but are not sure whether to report the matter the Designated Liaison Person will consult the appropriate HSE staff. In consulting the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person will clearly state that **he/she** is requesting advice and consultation and that **he/she** is not making a report. If the HSE advises that a referral should be made, the Designated Liaison Person will act on that advice.
- If following consultation with the appropriate HSE staff, the Designated Liaison Person decides that the concerns of the school employee will not be referred, the school employee will be given a clear statement, in writing, as to the reasons why action is not being taken. The school employee will be advised that, if he/she remains concerned about the situation, he/she is free to consult with or report to the HSE.

7. CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES

A child protection conference is a forum for the co-ordination of information from all relevant sources, including where necessary, school employees. The child protection conference plays a pivotal role in making recommendations and planning for the welfare of children who may be at serious risk.

- A request from the HSE for a school employee to attend a child protection conference should be made to the Designated Liaison Person who will consult with the Chairperson of the Board of Management of the school. The Chairperson of the Board of Management may, through the Designated Liaison Person, request the appropriate authorities to clarify why the attendance of the school employee at the child protection conference is considered necessary, who else is going to be present and if the employee is required to provide a report.
- If there are concerns about the attendance of parents/guardians, the school will contact the conference chairperson for guidance.
- As a result of the CP conference the school employee may be requested to keep the child's behaviour under closer observation, in a manner that is not inconsistent with the school employee's existing duties to his/her class as a whole. This may include observing the child's behaviour, peer interactions, school progress or informal conversations.

- In all cases, individuals who refer or discuss their concerns about the care and protection of children with HSE staff should be informed of the likely steps to be taken by the professionals involved. Wherever appropriate and within the normal limits of confidentiality, HSE have a responsibility to inform persons reporting alleged child abuse and other involved professionals about the outcomes of any enquiry or investigation into that reported concern.

8. ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF CHILD ABUSE BY SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

The primary concern of the Board of Management of **Holy Family School** is to protect the pupils attending the school to whom we have a duty of care. However, as an employer, the Board of Management also has responsibilities towards its employees. In this respect, and in the event of an allegation of abuse being made against an employee of the school the Board of Management will observe the employees' right not to be judged in advance of a full and fair enquiry.

Should an allegation of abuse be made against a school employee the Board of Management undertakes to seek legal advice in respect of same.

Reporting Procedure

- School employees, other than the Designated Liaison Person, who receive allegations of abuse against another school employee, will report the matter without delay to the Designated Liaison Person (or Chairperson of the Board of Management if appropriate).
- School employees who form suspicions regarding the conduct of another school employee will consult with the Designated Liaison Person (or Chairperson of the Board of Management if appropriate).
- Where an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee, the Designated Liaison Person within the school will immediately act in accordance with the procedures outlined in Section 6.2 of this policy. 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).
- Whether or not the matter is being reported to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management of the allegation.
- Where the allegation of abuse is against the Designated Liaison Person, the Chairperson of the Board of Management will assume responsibility for reporting the matter to the HSE or An Garda Síochána.

Action to be taken by the Chairperson of the Board of Management

- When a Chairperson of a Board of Management becomes aware of an allegation of abuse against a school employee, the Chairperson will privately inform the employee of the following:
 - the fact that an allegation has been made against him/her;
 - the nature of the allegation;
 - whether or not the matter has been reported to the HSE or An Garda Síochána by the Designated Liaison Person.
- 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 specified period of time. The employee will be informed that his/her explanation to the Board of Management will also have to be passed on to the HSE.
- In accordance with its duty of care the first priority of the Board of Management will be to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk. In this respect 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 pupils.
- If, in the Chairperson's 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. 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 HSE and/or An Garda Síochána for advice as to the action that those authorities consider necessary. Following those consultations, the Chairperson will have due regard for the advice offered.
- Any absence by a school employee will be regarded as administrative leave of absence with pay and not a suspension. Such a leave of absence 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:
 - Formal approval for the paid leave of absence of the school employee; and
 - Departmental sanction for the employment of a substitute teacher.
- 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 and/or An Garda Síochána.

Allegations Against Employees Pertaining to Previous Employment / Incidents Outside of School Hours:

- In situations where the allegations of abuse relate to the past employment of the school employee and where these allegations are being investigated by either the HSE or An Garda Síochána the Chairperson of the Board of Management 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 those authorities. If the decision is taken that the school employee should take administrative leave of absence, the Department of Education and Science will be immediately informed.
- Where the alleged abuse has taken place within **Holy Family 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. 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.
- Having followed the procedures outlined above, and having satisfied itself that it has sufficient information to hand in order 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. The Department of Education and Science will be informed of the outcome where the school employee had been directed to absent him/herself on administrative leave.

9. CONFIDENTIALITY

- All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse will only be shared on a need to know basis in the interests of the child.
- Giving information to those who need to have that information, for the protection of a child who may have been, or has been abused, is not a breach of confidentiality.
- Any Designated Liaison Person who is submitting a report to the health board or An Garda Síochána will inform a parent/guardian unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or place the child at further risk. A decision not to inform a parent/guardian will be recorded together with the reasons for not doing so.
- The Board of Management and staff of **Holy Family School** give an undertaking to deal with all child protection issues with the utmost confidentiality.

UPDATED: September 2021