

Child Protection Policy

Introduction

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

The Education Act 1998, The Education Welfare Act 2000,
The Protection of Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1993,
Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004,
Safety and Health at Work Act 2005.

The requirements of the Department of Education & Skills' Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, 2011.

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011 ("Children First Guidelines").

Department of Education & Skills Circular 0065/2011.

In all instances of suspicion or allegations of abuse or neglect, the following guidelines will be referenced: **Children First** (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2011) **Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools** (Department of Education and Skills, 2011)

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

- *Deirdre Savage (BOM Chairperson)*

Allegations or suspicions of child abuse should be brought to the attention of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) or, where necessary, to the Chairperson of the Board of Management or the relevant authorities.

- *Deirdre Savage (BOM Chairperson)*
- *Rose Marie Corry-Ryan: DLP*
- *Brenda Egan: Deputy Designated Liaison Person*
- *Ennis Garda Station: 065 6848100*
- *Tusla, Ennis: 065 6863935*

Rationale

The B.O.M. of Inch National School has adopted the D.E.S. guidelines and procedures for school in relation to Child Protection and Welfare. This policy is an outline of how Inch

National School proposes to implement these guidelines in order to ensure the protection and welfare of all children attending our school.

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School.

Inch National School seeks to help children to grow and develop into healthy, confident, mature adults, capable of realising their full potential as human beings. We strive to create a happy, safe environment for the children where they feel secure, knowing that if they have concerns, they will be listened to with understanding and respect and that their concerns will be acted on.

Policy Aims

The aims of the Child Protection Policy are to:

- Put in place clear procedures for dealing with and reporting suspected/alleged cases of child neglect or abuse
- Endeavour to safeguard the well being of the child and intervene when necessary to protect their rights
- Help school personnel recognise the signs of neglect or abuse
- Provide a safe environment for our school community

Guidelines

The guidelines are laid out as follows

- 1.0 Definition of Abuse
- 2.0 Handling disclosures
- 3.0 Roles and Responsibilities
 - 3.1 The Board of Management
 - 3.2 The DLP and Deputy DLP
 - 3.3 Staff Members and Volunteers
 - 3.4 The Health Service Executive
- 4.0 Child Protection Conferences
- 5.0 Confidentiality
- 6.0 Protection for Persons reporting child abuse
- 7.0 Freedom of Information
- 8.0 Organisational Implications
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- 8.2 Supervision
 - 8.3 Behaviour
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 - 8.5 Visitors/ Coaching
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 - 8.7 Children travelling in teachers cars
 - 8.8 Children travelling in buses hired by the school
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 - 8.10 Record Keeping
 - 8.11 Vetting of New Employees
 - 8.12 Induction of teachers and Ancillary Staff
 - 8.13 Induction of Pupils
 - 8.14 Attendance
 - 8.15 Cloakrooms/ Toilets
 - 8.16 First Aid/ Dealing with injuries.
 - 8.17 1:1 Teaching/ Communications with Pupils
 - 8.18 Assembly of Children
 - 8.19 Use of Images of Children
 - 8.20 Use of Technology
- 9.0 Curriculum Implications
- 10 Child Protection: Creating a Safe and Secure Environment
- 10.1 Code of Good Practice for BOM members, staff and volunteers.

1.0 Definition of Abuse

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types:

- Neglect
- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual Abuse

Definition of Neglect

Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults **(2.2.Children First)**

Definition of Emotional Abuse.

Emotional Abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between caregiver and a child rather than in specific events or patterns of events. It occurs when a child's needs for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms **(2.3 Children First)**

Definition of Physical Abuse

Physical abuse of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction, or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. **(2.4 Children First)**

Definition of Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his/her gratification or sexual arousal **(2.5 Children First)**

More details of each type of abuse is contained in **Appendix 2: Signs and symptoms of child abuse p.70, Children First, National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011**

The recognition of abuse normally runs along three stages:

1. **Considering the possibility** – if a child appears to have suffered an inexplicable and suspicious injury, seems distressed without obvious reason, display usual behaviour problems or appears fearful in the company of parents/carers
2. **Observing signs of abuse** a cluster or pattern of signs is the most reliable indicator of abuse. Children may make direct or indirect disclosures, which should always be taken seriously. Less obvious disclosures may be gently explored with a child, without direct questioning (which may more usefully be carried by the Health Board or Garda). Play situations such as drawing or story telling may reveal significant information which could be considered in relation to the child's social and family context, and it is important to always be open to alternative explanations.
3. **Recording of Information** it is important to establish the grounds for concern, by

obtaining as much information as possible. Observations should be recorded and should include dates, times, names, locations context and any information which could be considered relevant or which might facilitate further assessment/investigation.

2.0 Handling Disclosures from Children (3.5 DES Child Protection Procedures 2011)

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

When information is offered in confidence, the member of staff will need tact and sensitivity in responding to the disclosure. The member of staff will need to reassure the child and retain his/her trust while explaining the need for action and the possible consequence, which will necessarily involve other adults being informed. It is important to tell the child that everything possible will be done to protect and support him/her, but not to make promises that cannot be kept e.g. promising not to tell anyone else. While the basis for concern must be established as comprehensively as possible, the following advice is offered to school personnel to whom a child makes a disclosure of abuse.

- Listen to the child
- Do not ask leading questions nor make suggestions to the child
- Offer reassurance but do not make promises
- Do not stop a child recalling significant events
- Do not react
- Explain that further help may have to be sought
- Record the discussion accurately and retain the record.

This written information should be given to and retained by the DLP

3.0 Roles and Responsibilities:

3.1: THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

The Board of Management of *Inch National 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 and deputy DLP.
- 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, guidelines (**Chapter 5, D.E.S. Child Protection Procedures, p 30-34**)
- To ensure that curriculum provision aimed at the prevention of child abuse is in place, (Stay Safe Programme).
- 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.
- The Board is responsible for reviewing its Child Protection Policy annually and developing an action plan as a result of this review. (Appendix 1 of School Policy, Annual Review Checklist)
- The Board is responsible for informing staff and parents that this annual review has taken place.
- A record of the annual review is to be available on request to the school's patron and the D.E.S.

3.2 DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSONS (DLP) AND DEPUTY DLP (3.2 DES Child Protection Procedures)

All Boards of Management must designate a senior member of staff to have specific responsibility for child protection. This person will be the Designated Liaison Person for the school in dealing with the Health Boards, Garda Siochana and other parties in connection with allegations of abuse. Those other parties should be advised that they should conduct all matters pertaining to the processing or investigations of alleged child abuse through the Designated Liaison Person (DLP).

Where the Designated Liaison Person is unavailable for whatever reason, arrangements should be in place for another nominated member of staff to assume his/her responsibility.i.e. the Deputy Designated Liaison Person.

The Principal, Rose Marie Corry, will act as DLP following ratification by the Board of Management. **The Deputy Liaison Person is the Deputy Principal, Brenda Egan.** The DLP has specific responsibility for child protection and will represent the school in all dealings with Health Boards, Garda Siochana and other parties, in connection with allegations of abuse.

ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY THE DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON (4.2 DES Child Protection Procedures)

If the school employee and the Designated Liaison Person are satisfied that there are reasonable

grounds for the suspicion or allegation the DLP should report the matter to the relevant Health Board immediately. It may be useful to note:

- A report should be made to the Health Board in person by phone and writing. Each Health Board has a social worker who is available during certain hours to meet with, or talk on the telephone, to persons wishing to report child protection concerns
- It is generally most helpful if persons wishing to report child abuse concerns make personal contact with the duty social worker. This will facilitate the social worker in gathering as much information as possible about the child and his parent/carers
- In the event of an emergency, or the non availability of health board staff, the report should be made to the Garda. This may be done at any Garda Station.

It is recommended that all reports should include as much as possible of the information sought in the Standard Reporting Form. Since all information requested may not be available to the person making the report, the form should be completed as comprehensively as possible. **When such a report is being made to the health board, the Chairperson of the Board of Management should be informed.** In the case where the school personnel have concerns about a child, but are not sure whether to report the matter to the appropriate health board, they should seek appropriate advice. To do so, the DLP should consult the appropriate health board staff through an advisory phonecall. If the health board advises that a referral should be made, the DLP should act on that advice.

If, following the discussion outlined, the DLP receives advice from the H.S.E. that the concerns of the school employee should not be referred to the relevant Health Board, the school employee should be given a clear statement, in writing, as to the reason why the action is not being taken. The school employee should be advised that, if he/she remains concerned about the situation, he/she is free to consult with or report to the health board. Again, the standard reporting form (see template) of these guidelines should be used. Any such report would be covered by the **Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998.**

3.3 SCHOOL STAFF AND 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 and for continuous monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of such a programme.
- The planning and implementation of appropriate staff development and training programmes.
 - 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. **Section 2.0 of this policy and Section 3.5 of D.E.S. Protection Procedures 2011.**
- Staff members must familiarise themselves with the Children First 2011 Guidelines and the Child Protection procedures for primary and post primary schools (D.E.S. 2011) especially,
 - Chapter 2 (Children First and D.E.S. Guidelines)
 - Chapter 3 (Children First and D.E.S. Guidelines)
 - Appendix 2 of School Policy (Signs and symptoms of child abuse)
- Teachers must deliver the S.P.H.E. curriculum in line with the School plan for S.P.H.E. This includes the annual delivery of the Stay Safe Programme.
- At each Board of Management meeting the Principal is responsible for reporting the number of advisory calls made to the HSE and the amount of cases reported to the H.S.E. Specific details or names of individuals concerned shall not be included in this report. The principal's report will be recorded in the minutes of the Board meeting.

3.4 THE HEALTH SERVICE EXECUTIVE

TUSLA 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 TUSLA, it is then a matter for TUSLA 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 TUSLA 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. TUSLA 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 TUSLA to ensure that TUSLA acts promptly in cases of alleged abuse involving school employees.

4.0 Child Protection Conferences

- When a request is made from the Health Board through the D.L.P. he/she will consult with the Chairperson of the B.O.M. The Chairperson may seek clarification through the D.L.P. as to why the attendance of the school employee is necessary and ascertain who else will be present.
- The school employee may complete a report for the meeting/conference.
- The school employee will be advised if children/parents/guardians are going to be present. The school employee may contact the Chairperson of the Child Protection Meeting for advice.
- 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.
- In all cases, individuals who refer or discuss their concerns about the care and protection of children with Health Board 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
- Teachers attending a child protection meeting/case conference should familiarise themselves with the protocol outlined in **Section 4.5 of the D.E.S. Child Protection Procedures 2011**

5.0 Confidentiality (Section 1.9 DES Child Protection Procedures 2011)

All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse should be only shared on a need to know basis, in the interest of the child. The test is whether or not the person has any legitimate

involvement or role in dealing with the issue.

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

The DLP who is submitting a report to the Health Board or Garda Siochana should inform a parent/guardian, unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or place that child at further risk. A decision not to inform a parent/guardian should be briefly recorded together with the reason for not doing so.

In emergency situations, where the health board cannot be contacted, and the child appears at immediate and serious risk, an Garda Siochana should be contacted immediately. **Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending health board intervention.**

The Board of Management and the staff of Inch National School give an undertaking to deal with all child protection issues with the utmost confidentiality.

6.0 Protection for persons reporting child abuse (Section 1.10 DES Child Protection Procedures 2011 and Section 3.10 Children First 2011)

The protection for persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998, provides immunity from civil liability to any person who reports suspicions of child abuse reasonably and in good faith to designated officers of Health Boards, or any member of an Garda Siochana. This means that even if a reported suspicion of child abuse proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the reporter had not acted reasonably and in good faith making the report.

The Act provides significant protection for employees who report child abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to and including dismissal.

The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 came into operation on 23rd January 1999. Its main provisions are:

1. The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse **reasonably and in good faith** to designated officers of Health Board or any member of the Garda Siochana
2. The provision of significant protections for employees who report child abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to and including dismissal
3. The creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities **knowing that statement to be false.** This is a new criminal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

QUALIFIED PRIVILEGE (Section 1.11. DES Child Protection Procedures 2011)

While the legal protection outlined above only applies to reports made to the appropriate authorities (i, e, Health Boards and an Garda Siochana), Common Law qualified privilege continues to apply as heretofore. Consequently, should a Board of Management member or school personnel furnish information with regard to suspicions of child abuse to the DLP or Chairperson of the Board of Management, such communication would be regarded under common law as having qualified privilege. Qualified privilege arises where the person making the communication has a duty to do so, or a right, or interest to protect the child and where the

communication is made to a person with a similar duty, right or interest. The person making the report, acting in loco parentis, would be expected to act in the child's best interests and in making the report would be regarded as acting in such a manner. Privilege can be displaced only where it can be established that the person making the report acted maliciously. Furthermore, those reporting a child's disclosure are not regarded as making an allegation as a matter of charge, but simply carrying out of their duty in good faith. They are not accusing or bringing a charge.

7.0 Freedom of Information

- 1. DES Protection Procedures 2011 Section 1.12 and 1.13**
- 2. Children First 2011, HSE Section 3.11**

Reports made to Health Boards may be subject to provisions of Freedom of Information Act 1997, which enables members of 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.

8.0 Organisational Implications

8.1 Policy Review

School procedures will be examined on an ongoing basis with reference to the safety and welfare of children.

The following policies and procedures have been examined in this review:

Supervision

Code of Behaviour

Visitors

Swimming

Mass Servers

Induction of all New Staff

Attendance

Coaching

Buses hired by the school

Attendance

Bullying

Children travelling in teachers cars

Record Keeping

Induction of Pupils

1:1 Teaching

Assembly of Children

Acceptable Usage Policy

Cloakrooms/toilets

8.2 Supervision

School supervision policy will be followed by all staff to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children throughout the school from the time the school opens to receive pupils until the end of the school day.

A rota is displayed on the Staff Notice Board to cover 11 o'clock and lunchtime breaks.

Children will not be allowed to enter the school during break time without permission from the supervising teacher.

Children who have to remain indoors at break time will all be accommodated in the corridor outside the staffroom.

Teachers on yard duty will be aware of visitors entering the schoolyard and will ascertain their intentions.

See supervision policy for agreed rules around break-times.

See supervision policy for procedures around teacher absences.

8.3 Behaviour

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

8.4 Bullying

Bullying behaviour will be addressed under our Anti-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. We recognise that bullying can be pupil/pupil; pupil/staff; staff/pupil; parent/staff; staff/parents; staff/staff.

8.5 Visitors/Coaching

All visitors who wish to speak to children during the school day must first report to the office. People, other than parents, collecting children outside of the normal times must sign a Release Book which will be maintained in each class.

Visitors working with the pupils must discuss and clear the content of their work with the class teacher in advance of taking the class.

Where coaches or other visitors to the school are working with pupils they will always be accompanied by a staff member.

A Code of Ethics has been drawn up and all coaches / visitors are asked to agree to it prior to commencing any work in the school. See Appendix 4.

Inquire of the organisers if the coach has been vetted, or if the coach has been appraised of the organisation's Child Protection Guidelines.

Class teacher must remain with his/her class at all times or in the case of having to leave organisers for his/her class to be supervised. The teacher remains responsible for the pupils in their care and therefore class discipline/safety etc. is the responsibility of the class teacher. Class teacher should inform visitors working with pupils of their responsibilities under Child Protection Guidelines which include use of respectful language and respectful attitude towards all pupils, the avoidance of one to one situations with pupils, and the avoidance of avoidable physical contact with pupils.

8.6 Swimming

Children will be accompanied to the swimming pool by two teachers where possible.

Teachers will ensure that dressing rooms are supervised before and after swimming. If it is inappropriate to enter the dressing room, then supervisors should be available near the door to be of assistance to pupils if required.

One teacher may supervise the dressing room while the other supervises the children who have finished.

The last five or six children to finish will be held until all have finished changing.

Children and parents will be reminded of these procedures at the beginning of each year.

If pupils wish they can opt to wear t shirts in the pool.

Concerns re arrangements at the Swimming Pool should be relayed by the supervising teacher/principal to the pool management.

8.7 Children travelling in cars for school activities

Teachers will not carry children alone in their cars at any time.

The school will organise buses to transport children to and from school activities.

8.8 Children travelling in buses hired by the school

Teachers will always accompany pupils on the bus. Teachers will supervise the children on the bus and pupils will be subject to the school's Code of Behaviour.

It is the responsibility of the bus company to ensure that the vehicle meets all safety standards and that the drivers drive in a safe and responsible manner.

Bus driver will be informed by the school as to where to park to allow for children to enter/exit buses as safely as possible. Parents to be informed of same (possibly at parent night)

8.9 Mass Servers

If pupils are required for Mass Serving during the school day (e.g. for Funeral Masses), the parents of the pupils should be contacted in advance by those requesting servers (normally either the priest or relatives of the deceased) and permission obtained from the parents to allow the pupils to serve Mass.

8.10 Record Keeping

Roll books will be updated daily. Sensitive information regarding children will be shared on a need-to-know basis. Further details on record keeping are found in the school's *Record Keeping Policy*. Information relating to allegations or suspicions of Child Abuse will be passed on to the DLP who will maintain records in a secure file. *If an incident/accident book is operational in the school, the DLP will check the book on a regular basis for any emerging patterns.*

8.11 Vetting of New Employees

The Board of Management undertakes that it will comply with legal requirements and directions from the Department of Education and Skills in relation to Garda Vetting of new employees and, in particular:-

- A Garda Vetting Letter/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.

8.12 Induction of Teachers and Ancillary Staff

New permanent and temporary staff will be required to provide two referees. They will also be required to provide written consent to allow the school to check for their records to be vetted by the Gardaí.

The DLP will be responsible for informing all new teachers and ancillary staff of the school Child protection Policy. The DLP will give a copy of this Policy to all new staff. All new teachers are expected to teach the SPHE programme.

8.13 Induction of Pupils

Parents of enrolling children will be given an Enrolment Booklet which will include Information on the schools Attendance Policy and the implications of the Education Welfare Act (2000)

Programmes are in place in the school that deal with personal development e.g. RSE, Walk Tall and Stay Safe.

The school's Code of Behaviour, Attendance policy, Anti-Bullying policy and Child Protection policy, outline the procedures parents and children should use when contacting the school if they have concerns

8.14 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 conjunction with signs of neglect/physical/sexual/emotional abuse.

8.15 Cloakrooms/toilets

Staff should avoid being one on one with a child in the toilet – if necessary call another member of staff.

Make sure there isn't a collection of children in the toilets.

For your own protection call another staff member if you find that you have to be one on one with a child

8.16 First Aid/Dealing with injuries

Injuries – reasonable care to be taken. Ensure that the child is ok. Phone parent.

Dressing rooms – ensure that you are not alone. The last five or six children to finish should

be held until all have finished changing.

8.17 1:1 Teaching/communications with pupils

The school does not promote 1:1 teaching as a matter of practice. Where one to one teaching/communication is necessary the following guidelines will apply.

Second adult present if possible (SNA)

Teachers will endeavour to ensure visibility by leaving the door open.

Arrangements will be made with other staff to visit the room on an ad hoc basis.

Discipline – at all times have another teacher present if alone with a child.

8.18 Assembly of Children

Parents will be reminded termly that

the school only accepts responsibility for supervision during school hours

the yard is not supervised prior to 9.00am

children should not be sent to school prior to that time.

8.19 Use of Images of Children

- The school undertakes to seek parents' or guardians' permission for the use of photographs of pupils for any purposes.
- At school ceremonies and other public events, the school will publicly announce the use of photographic and audio visual equipment by the school so that anyone who would rather not be photographed or videoed can remove themselves.
- Where the P.A. is using a photographer e.g. school calendar, they must ensure the photographer is vetted and seek prior approval for the Board.
- Where parents are organising a photographer/ videographer for religious occasions, e.g. First Communion, Confirmation, prior approval must be sought from the Board and permission obtained by the organising committee from all relevant parents. The photographer/ videographer must also be garda vetted.
- 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 Board of Management

8.20 Use of Technology

- Procedures with regard to the use of technology are contained in the school's Acceptable Usage Policy.
- The use of mobile phones or any other recording device by pupils both in school and on school excursions is strictly prohibited.

9.0 Curriculum Implications

Inch National School endeavours to create a positive school climate which is open, inclusive, respectful, and fair. The strategies we will use to create this environment are detailed in our SPHE 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 SPHE programme with a view to giving our children the protective skills of self-esteem and assertiveness.

The school will deliver the Stay-safe programme on an annual basis as part of our SPHE Programme.

10 Child Protection: Creating a Safe and Secure Environment

10.1 Code of Good Practice for BOM members, Staff and 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.

Personnel are required to comply with Chapter 3 of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools which outlines their responsibilities.

In its policies, practices and activities, *Inch 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 harm or accidents 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; and
- fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.

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. School personnel should only be alone with a pupil if exceptional and/or emergency circumstances arise which makes it necessary to be alone with a pupil. If such circumstances do arise and it is necessary for personnel to be alone with a pupil, the staff member should do the following:- (i) inform the DLP as soon as possible; (ii) make a note of the meeting and the reasons for it; (iii) inform the pupil's parents/guardian unless to do so would put the child at further risk.
- 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. Personnel should not be alone with pupils in such areas as 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. No such meeting should take place without the pupil's parent/guardian being present, unless the presence of the parent/guardian would place the pupil at risk.

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.

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 DLP.

Success Criteria

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

- Delivery of the SPHE curriculum
- Assessment of these procedures by participants following a child protection case
- Feedback from all staff

Timeframe for Implementation

Implementation for the 2011-2012 school year.

Implementation Process To Date

Presentation to BOM, February 2012

Discussion at staff meeting – February 2012

Staff to read the DES guidelines – February 2012

Ratification of these guidelines- February 2012

Timeframe for Review

Checklist to be reviewed annually

Whole Policy review- 2016- 2017

Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on the 8th February 2012.

The reviewed policy was ratified BY St. Senan’s Education Office in May 2017

The reviewed policy was ratified by the Board of Management in May 2017