

Child Protection Policy

1. Introduction

The Board of Management of Knockanean N.S. 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 Board of Management has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools as part of this overall child protection policy. A copy of our Child Protection Policy has been given to all school personnel, P.A. and is readily available to the parents, patron or the Department if requested.

The Child Protection Policy of Knockanean N.S. has been developed in accordance with

- Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures for National Schools, Department of Education & Science, 2006 (Circular 61/2006)
- Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Department of Health & Children, 2011 (All teachers provided with a copy)
- Department of Education Circular 0065/2011 "Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools" (All school personnel, B.O.M. members and P.A. members provided with a copy.)

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

- Ms Betty Murphy, Chairperson Board of Management

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

- Ms. Betty Murphy Chairperson Board of Management (065) 6840088
- Jim Curran DLP (065) 6840088
- Garda Station Ennis(065) 6848100
- Name and contact details for local HSE office.-
 - Clare Duty Social Worker, River House, Gort Road Ennis (065) 6863935
 - Social work Department, Shannon Health Centre, Shannon (061) 718400

2. Background

2.1 Child Abuse: Towards a Definition

Knockanean N.S. 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.

In the Children First National Guidelines 2011 “a child” means a person under the age of 18 years, excluding a person who is or has been married.

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, and/or medical care.

Harm can be defined as the ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Whether it is *significant* is determined by the child’s health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a child of similar age.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways *over a period of time* rather than at one specific point. For example, a child who suffers a series of minor injuries may not be having his or her needs met in terms of necessary supervision and safety. A child whose height or weight is significantly below average may be being deprived of adequate nutrition. A child who consistently misses school may be being deprived of intellectual stimulation.

The *threshold of significant harm* is reached when the child’s needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well-being and/or development are severely affected.

Definition of ‘Emotional Abuse’

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the *relationship* between a parent/carer and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child’s developmental need 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.

Examples may include:

- The imposition of negative attributes on a child, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;
- Conditional parenting in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviours or actions;
- Emotional unavailability of the child's parent/carer;
- Unresponsiveness of the parent/carer and/or inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of the child;
- Premature imposition of responsibility on the child;
- Unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the child's capacity to understand something or to behave and control himself or herself in a certain way;
- Under- or over-protection of the child;
- Failure to show interest in, or provide age-appropriate opportunities for, the child's cognitive and emotional development;
- Use of unreasonable or over-harsh disciplinary measures;
- Exposure to domestic violence;
- Exposure to inappropriate or abusive material through new technology.

Emotional abuse can be manifested in terms of the child's behavioural, cognitive, affective or physical functioning. Examples of these include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, and oppositional behaviour.

The *threshold of significant harm* is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become *typical* of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.

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. There may be single or repeated incidents.

Physical abuse can involve:

- Severe physical punishment;
- Beating, slapping, hitting or kicking;
- Pushing, shaking or throwing;
- Pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling;
- Terrorising with threats;
- Observing violence;
- Use of excessive force in handling;
- Deliberate poisoning;
- Suffocation;
- Fabricated/induced illness
- Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.

Definition of ‘Sexual Abuse’

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

- Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of the child;
- Intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;
- Masturbation in the presence of the child or the involvement of the child in an act of masturbation;
- Sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal;
- Sexual exploitation of a child, which includes inciting, encouraging, propositioning, requiring or permitting a child to solicit for, or to engage in, prostitution or other sexual acts.
- Sexual exploitation also occurs when a child is involved in the exhibition, modeling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, video tape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of the image by computer or other means. It may also include showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the ‘grooming’ process by perpetrators of abuse;
- Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person. In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that, for the purposes of the criminal law, the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for both boys and girls. An Garda Síochána will deal with the criminal aspects of the case under the relevant legislation.

It should be noted that the definition of child sexual abuse presented in this section is not a legal definition and is not intended to be a description of the criminal offence of sexual assault.

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 Knockanean N.S. 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 the victim and the alleged abuser; that is, the matter will be considered a child care and protection issue for both children.

2.2 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’.

2.3 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

3.1 The Board of Management

The Board of Management of Knockanean N.S. 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 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.

3.2 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.

3.3 Role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

- 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.

Principal's report to the Board of Management

At each Board of Management meeting the principal's report shall:

- (a) state the number of reports made to the HSE by the DLP, since the last Board of Management meeting and
- (b) state the number of cases, since the last Board meeting, where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report was made, or
- (c) where there were no such cases at (a) or (b) above, state this fact.

The minutes of the Board of Management meeting shall record the above.

Note: The Principal's report shall state only the number of cases at (a) and (b) and shall not include any other details of these cases.

3.4 Role of the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLPL)

- The Deputy Designated Liaison Person is responsible for performing the DLP's responsibilities if he is unavailable or in his absence.
- The DDPL of Knockanean N.S. is **Ms. Joan Mc Namara**.

4. Child protection: Creating a Safe & Secure Environment

4.1 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.
- Two staff members must be aware when intimate toileting needs are being met. S.N.A.'s should inform the secretary (while she is on the premises) or inform another staff member after the secretary has gone home. The toilet door should be left slightly ajar.

- In an emergency situation where this type of help is required, parents should be fully informed as soon as is reasonably possible.

(See Knockanean N.S. Intimate Care Policy)

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)
“Confidentiality must never be promised to a person making a disclosure” (Children First pg 23)
- 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 in our Child Protection Recording Book, 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 (Locked in the Principal’s Office Filing cabinets) by the Designated Liaison Person.

Pupils will only be identified by a coded reference with a unique identifier reference. All documents filed in the secure filing system relating to an employee will be given a coded reference with a unique identifier reference.

4.2 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.

(See Knockanean N.S. Vetting Policy)

4.3 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 Circular 0065/2011 and Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children ,2011
 - 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.

4.4 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.

(See Knockanean N.S. Supervision Policy)

4.5 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. Parental/Guardian consent will be required for this. Teachers are required where possible to leave the door slightly ajar when on their own with a child.

4.6 Attendance

Procedures with regard to the monitoring of school attendance

(See Knockanean N.S. Attendance Promotion Policy)

4.7 Curriculum

Stay Safe:

Organisational and Curricular Issues:

We contribute to the prevention of child abuse through the SPHE curriculum, particularly through the Strand Unit, Safety and Protection. The Child Protection Programme that is to be implemented in Knockanean National School is the Stay Safe Programme. It will be taught from Junior Infants to Sixth Class in its entirety and without modification and will be taught on alternate years. Any additional resources selected will be in keeping with the aims of this policy.

If children are withdrawn, parents are responsible for supervising the pupils and for ensuring the Stay Safe Programme is taught to their children. 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 themselves or discloses personal information.

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

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

Parents are invited to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns.

(See Knockanean N.S. SPHE Policy)

4.8 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.
- 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.

4.9 Use of Technology

- Procedures with regard to the use of technology. (See Knockanean N.S. Acceptable Usage Policy.
- Procedures with regard to the use of mobile phones (*See Knockanean N.S. Mobile phones / Electronic Games Policy*)

4.10 School Visitors

Procedures with regard to school visitors (See Knockanean N.S. School Visitors Policy).

4.11 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.

4.12 School Tours / Overnight Trips

-
- 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 will be made available to parents and guardians.
 - If the teachers feel it is necessary, older pupils may bring a mobile phone.
 - **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.
 - Particular attention will be given to ensuring that the privacy of young people is respected when they are away on trips.
 - The provision of appropriate and adequate sleeping arrangements will be ensured in advance of the trip.
 - At least two adults will be present in dormitories in which children are sleeping. Under no circumstances will an adult share a bedroom with a young person.
 - If, in an emergency situation, an adult considers it necessary to be in a child's dormitory or bedroom without another adult being present they will (a) immediately inform another adult in a position of responsibility and (b) make a diary note of the circumstances.

(See Knockanean N.S. Tours Policy)

(See Knockanean N.S. Field Trip Procedures)

4.13 Swimming

Children will be transported by cars. Pupils will be counted before departure both to and from venue. Children will change in a communal locker room unless a parent/child requests the use of an individual locker room. It is recommended that two adults would travel with each group – one to supervise changing rooms prior to and when lesson is complete and one in reception area. Parents are welcome to help their own children with the changing process and this will be carried out in family cubicles. Those students who opt out of swimming lessons will remain in school, in the adjoining class, for the duration of the swimming time. Those who miss once off swimming lessons will remain with the class teacher at the swimming pool..

(See Knockanean N.S. Swimming Policy)

4.14 Record Keeping

- Roll books will be updated daily. Sensitive information regarding children will be shared on a need to know basis. All educational files on children who no longer attend this school will be kept in the store room for as long as is required by legislation.

-
- Assessments and results of standardised tests, plus copies of report cards will be stored in the learning support rooms and shared with the relevant personnel as necessary. Standardised test scores are kept in electronic format by the LS/RT.. The scripts from all standardised tests are shredded after a year, except those who attend learning support and resource. The cover page is retained.
 - All school personnel will be responsible for the safe keeping of notes on children in their care.
 - Yard book. All major accidents/incidents should be recorded in the Yard Book. This book is retained in the office.

(See Knockanean N.S. Data Protection Policy)

- Absence notes (See Knockanean N.S. Attendance Promotion Policy)

4.14 Sport and Sport Related Activities

(See Knockanean N.S. Garda Vetting Policy page 8)

5. Reporting Cases of suspected child abuse

5.1 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.

5.2 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 is requesting advice and consultation and that he 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.

6. 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.

7. Allegations or Suspicions of child abuse by school employees

The primary concern of the Board of Management of Knockanean N.S. 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.

7.1 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 5.2 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.
- In addition to informing the school authority of those cases where a report involving a child in the school has been submitted to the HSE, the DLP shall also inform the school authority of cases where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report was made. At each Board of Management meeting the principal's report shall include the number of all such cases and this shall be recorded in the minutes of the board meeting.

-
- 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.

7.2 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 Knockanean N.S., 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.

8. 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 Knockanean N.S. give an undertaking to deal with all child protection issues with the utmost confidentiality.

9. Review

Knockanean N.S. will undertake an annual review of its child protection policy and its implementation by the school. A checklist to be used in undertaking the review is included at **Appendix 3**. The school must put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement identified by the review. The Board of Management shall make arrangements to inform school personnel that the review has been undertaken. Written notification, that the review has been undertaken shall be provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome shall be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

The Annual Review of the Child Protection Policy for the school year 2015/2016 took place on January 11th 2016. The staff and parents have been informed of this review and a copy was sent to the Parents Association.

Date of next review: January 2017

10. Related Policies

- *Code of Behaviour*
- *Anti Bullying Policy*
- *Attendance Promotion Policy*
- *School Visitors Policy*
- *Acceptable Usage Policy*
- *Mobile Phone Policy*
- *Garda Vetting Policy*
- *Data Protection Policy*
- *Intimate Care Policy*
- *SPHE Policy*
- *Tours Policy*
- *Supervision Policy*
- *Field Trip Procedures*

11. Policy Ratification

The policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Knockanean N.S. at its meeting held on

Date_____.

Signed: _____ Chairperson, Board of Management

This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on

Signed on behalf of the board by

_____ Chairperson , Board of Management

This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on

Signed on behalf of the board by

_____ Chairperson , Board of Management

This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on

Signed on behalf of the board by

_____ Chairperson , Board of Management

This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on

Signed on behalf of the board by

Chairperson , Board of Management

12. Patron's Approval

This policy has been approved by St. Senan's Education Office, acting on behalf of the Patron –Bishop Kieran O Reilly.

Appendix 1

Knockanean National School

Child Protection Guidelines Checklist for School Employees (Copy given to each employee)

Designated Liaison Person:	Jim Curran (Principal)
Deputy Designated Liaison Person:	Joan Mc Namara (Deputy Principal)

If a child discloses information to you:-

- Listen
- Do not ask leading questions
- Offer reassurance but do not promise not to tell
- Explain that other adults may need to be told - DLP
- Do not stop the child speaking
- Do not over react or comment

- Inform DLP - If you have a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern that a child is at risk or has suffered abuse, the DLP should contact the Health Board for advice
- At the earliest opportunity, record accurately what the child has said – Using the child's own words. Record date/time and context of the disclosure. Use child's registration number – Not child's name
- Facts only
- Sketch signs of physical injury if appropriate
- Retain records for a period of 21 years in keeping with the school's Record Keeping Policy

The following should also be reported to the DLP:

- An account from a person who saw a child being abused
- Injury consistent with abuse
- Dysfunctional behaviour
- Implausible explanations for injury or behaviour
- Consistent evidence over a period of time that a child is being emotionally or physically neglected

Health Board Response:

- School is asked to monitor the situation
- Formal report is requested , sent by DLP and on receipt case is allocated to Social Worker
- Preliminary enquiry – Screening process
- Initial assessment

Possible outcomes:

- Case closed
- Family support
- Child Protection Plan (usually following a case conference)

Appendix 2

Reporting Procedures for DLP

- DLP receives report of child protection concern
- DLP records the report – date/time/context. Child's registration number is used for recording purposes
- DLP makes decision on how to proceed based on information received

-
- DLP informs Chairperson of Board of Management that initial contact is being made with Health Board
 - DLP makes contact with Health Board seeking advice (Do not give name of child at this point. Be very clear that you are seeking advice). Take the name of the person you spoke to and record conversation
 - Duty Social Worker makes recommendation. This may involve school continuing to monitor the situation. Record this decision and send written record of this decision to Health Board. Alternatively a formal referral made on standard reporting form may be recommended by Social Worker (Keep a copy on file in a secure place)
 - If Health Board not available and case warrants immediate response – Gardaí are informed
 - Decision made on informing/not informing parents - taking safety of the child into consideration as number one priority. A decision NOT to inform parent/s should only be made where there is a genuine concern for the safety of the child. Be transparent with parent/s and ensure that they are aware that you have a non-negotiable responsibility as DLP to act in the best interests of the child (Refer to Children First)
 - If DLP decides not to contact Health Board in relation to the case – person who made original report must be informed in writing
 - Continued monitoring of child should be recommended
 - Child Protection concerns that have been reported to the Health Board should be included in the Principal's Report to Board of Management Meeting - Child's name is not used

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

- **Chairperson BoM:** Ms Betty Murphy (065) 6840088
- **Health Board:** Clare Duty Social Worker, Gort Rd Ennis. (065)6863935

Social Work Dept, Shannon Health Centre (061) 718400
- **Gardaí :** Ennis Garda Station (065) 6848100
- **Local Hospital:** Mid Western Regional Hospital, Limerick (061) 301111

Ennis County Hospital, (065) 6824464
- **School Nurse:** Angela O Halloran (085) 1211665
- **CAPP (Stay Safe Programme):** 01 6206346
- **J.L.O:** Garda Therese Flannery, Ennis Garda Station. (065) 6848100

Appendix 3:

Checklist for Annual Review of the Child Protection Policy

The Board of Management must undertake an annual review of its child protection policy and the following checklist shall be used for this purpose.

The checklist is designed as an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. Individual Boards of Management may wish to include other items in the checklist that are of particular relevance to the school in question.

As part of the overall review process, Boards of Management should also assess other school policies, practices and activities vis a vis their adherence to the principles of best practice in child protection and welfare as set out in the school's child protection policy.

	Yes/No
Has the Board formally adopted a child protection policy in accordance with the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	
As part of the school's child protection policy, has the Board formally adopted, without modification, the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	
Are there both a DLP and a Deputy DLP currently appointed?	
Are the relevant contact details (HSE and An Garda Síochána) to hand?	
Has the DLP attended available child protection training?	
Has the Deputy DLP attended available child protection training?	
Have any members of the Board attended child protection training?	
Has the school's child protection policy identified other school policies, practices and activities that are regarded as having particular child protection relevance?	
Has the Board ensured that the Department's "Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools" are available to all school personnel?	
Has the Board arrangements in place to communicate the school's child protection policy to new school personnel?	
Is the Board satisfied that all school personnel have been made aware of their responsibilities under the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	

Knockanean N.S.

Since the Board's last annual review, was the Board informed of any child protection reports made to the HSE/An Garda Síochána by the DLP?	
Since the Board's last annual review, was the Board informed of any cases where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report to the HSE was made?	
Is the Board satisfied that the child protection procedures in relation to the making of reports to the HSE/ An Garda Síochána were appropriately followed?	
Were child protection matters reported to the Board appropriately recorded in the Board minutes?	
Is the Board satisfied that all records relating to child protection are appropriately filed and stored securely?	
Has the Board ensured that the Parents' Association (if any), has been provided with the school's child protection policy?	

	Yes/No
Has the Board ensured that the school's child protection policy is available to parents on request?	
Has the Board ensured that the Stay Safe programme is implemented in full in the school? (applies to primary schools)	
Has the Board ensured that the SPHE curriculum is implemented in full in the school?	
Is the Board satisfied that the Department's requirements for Garda Vetting have been met in respect of all school personnel (employees and volunteers)? *	
Is the Board satisfied that the Department's requirements in relation to the provision of a child protection related statutory declaration and associated form of undertaking have been met in respect of persons appointed to teaching and non-teaching positions?*	
Is the Board satisfied that, from a child protection perspective, thorough recruitment and selection procedures are applied by the school in relation to all school personnel (employees and volunteers)?*	
Is the Board satisfied that the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools' are being fully and adequately implemented by the school?	
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's child protection policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	
Has the Board put in place an action plan containing appropriate timelines to address those aspects of the school's child protection policy and/or its implementation that have been identified as requiring further improvement ?	
Has the Board ensured that any areas for improvement that that were identified in any previous review of the school's child protection policy have been adequately addressed?	

Signed _____ Date _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Knockanean N.S.

Signed _____ Date _____
Principal

Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the child protection policy

To: _____

The Board of Management of Knockanean N.S. wishes to inform you that:

- The Board of Management's annual review of the school's child protection policy was completed at the Board meeting of _____ [date].

- This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in Appendix 2 of the Department's 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'

Signed _____ Date _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____ Date _____
Principal

Child Protection Policy (To be displayed in corridor of school)

Child Protection Policy of Knockanean N.S.

The Board of Management recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and must be reflected in all of the school's policies, practices and activities. Accordingly, in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills' Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, the Board of Management of Knockanean N.S. has a very comprehensive child protection policy:

1. The Board of Management has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools as part of this overall child protection policy.
2. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Jim Curran (Principal)
3. The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Joan Mc Namara (Deputy Principal)
4. In its policies, practices and activities, Knockanean N.S. 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.

The school will also adhere to the above principles in relation to any adult pupil with a special vulnerability.

5. The following are a list of school policies, practices and activities that are particularly relevant to child protection in our school

- Code of Behaviour
- Anti Bullying Policy

Knockanean N.S.

-
- Attendance Promotion Policy
 - School Visitors Policy
 - Acceptable Usage Policy
 - Mobile Phone Policy
 - Data Protection Policy
 - Intimate Care Policy
 - SPHE Policy
 - Tours Policy
 - Supervision Policy
 - Field Trip Procedures

The Board has ensured that the necessary policies, protocols or practices as appropriate are in place in respect of each of the above listed items.

6. Our Child Protection Policy has been made available to school personnel and the Parents' Association and is readily accessible to parents on request. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

7. This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____

Signed: _____
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: _____
Principal

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date of next review: _____