

**Child Protection Policy**  
**Edmund Rice School, New Ross.**

1. Mindful of this primary duty of care, the Board of Management of Edmund Rice, New Ross, fully endorses “Children First”, the designated rules for the protection and welfare of children as issued by the Department of Health and Children, September 1999 and “Child Protection Procedures” from the Department of Education & Science, April 2001.
2. The Board nominates Brian MacMahon as the designated liaison person (DLP) to act as a liaison with outside agencies such as the HSE and as a resource person to any staff member(s) having child protection concerns.
3. Deputy Principal Niamh King is the Deputy Designated Liaison Person.
4. The Board will ensure that appropriate and on-going training as necessary will be available for DLP and the DDLP.
5. In keeping with the Children and Vulnerable Persons Act (2012) as amended by the Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016 , all workers and volunteers in the Edmund Rice School will be required to be Garda Vetted.
6. The Board undertakes to include a Child Protection Report at each board meeting.
7. The Board will ensure that all school staff, teaching and non-teaching are aware of their obligations under the guidelines detailed in Children First .
8. The Board will adhere to the protocol outlined in Ch. 4. Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse of School Employees, in “Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures” from the Department of Education & Science 2001, to authorise any actions required to protect the children in its care.
9. The Board believes that the academic, personal and social development of children flourishes in a culture where good relationships are encouraged, people feel valued and respected and appropriate support is available for those in difficulty.
10. The Board is committed to the maintenance of an environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to express themselves and are listened to. All children in the school will be made aware that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried. In addition, opportunities will be included in the curriculum for children to develop the skills they need to keep them safe.
11. In its policies, practices and activities, Edmund Rice Primary School will adhere to the following principles of best practice in child protection and welfare:
  - The school will fully co-operate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters;
  - The school will 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;
  - The school will 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 operate a Care Team consisting of DLP; DDLP ; Project Workers and other relevant staff which will meet monthly .
  - The school will use an internal referral form to ensure that all concerns related by staff to the DLP are recorded and followed up on.
- 12. The school will also adhere to the above principles in relation to any adult pupil with a special vulnerability.
- 13. School policies, practices and activities that are particularly relevant to child protection are the Code of
  - Behaviour Policy
  - Anti-bullying Policy
  - Attendance Policy
- 14. 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.
- 15. This 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.
- 16. This policy statement regarding Child Protection at Edmund Rice Senior School applies to all staff, members of the Board of Management, volunteers and contractors working in the school.
- 17. This policy statement will be subject to review at the start of each academic year forthwith.

This Policy was adopted by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson

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D.L.P

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Deputy D.L.P.

# **Edmund Rice Senior School, New Ross**

## **Summary of ‘Children First’ Procedures for Staff**

### **Child Protection Policy Summary**

- We , as teachers, are governed by the Child Protection Guidelines. A full copy of same is available on the school web page and every member of staff is issued with an electronic copy in PDF format.
- The principal , Brian MacMahon, is also the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the Deputy Principal , Niamh King, is the Deputy DLP. These are the people you should report to if you have any suspicion of child abuse or if you have any issue around child protection.
- Please read the attached extract from the Child Protect Guidelines on **responsibilities** and on what to do in the event of a **disclosure**.
- If you have a suspicion you MUST report. This is a legal obligation. Report in the first instance to the DLP ot to the DDLP if the DLP is not present. Do so immediately.
- You are legally protected by Qualified Privilege – that is , you have a DUTY to report , not a choice. This gives you legal protection from anyone who might try to sue you ,etc. (alleged defamatory remark , etc.) This holds as long as the report you made was not malicious.
- The Freedom of Information Act provides that public bodies may refuse access to information obtained by them in confidence.
- Child Abuse can be emotional, physical, sexual, or neglect.
- Neglect : clothing, food, supervision, hygiene.
- All child care issue are **confidential** and information is exchanged on **a need**

### **to know basis.**

- Teachers should not discuss child protection issues in public (staff room,etc.) .
- **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 ongoing failure to thrive or whose height 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.
- **Emotional abuse** can be manifested in terms of the child's behavioural, cognitive, affective or physical functioning. Examples of these include insecure attachment, non-organic failure to thrive, 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.
- The **possibility** of child abuse should be considered if a child appears to have suffered a suspicious injury for which no reasonable explanation can be offered. It should also be considered if the child seems distressed without obvious reason or displays persistent or new behavioural problems. The possibility of child abuse should also be considered if the child displays unusual or fearful responses to parents/carers or older children.
- **Signs of abuse** can be physical, behavioural or developmental. They can exist in the relationships between children and parents/carers or between children and other family members/other persons. A cluster or pattern of signs is likely to be more indicative of abuse. Children who are being abused may hint that they are being harmed and sometimes make direct disclosures. Disclosures

should always be believed. The child should not be interviewed in detail about the alleged abuse without first consulting with the Children and Family Social Services of the HSE. This may be more appropriately carried out by a social worker or An Garda Síochána. Less obvious signs could be gently explored with the child, without direct questioning. Play situations, such as drawing or story-telling, may reveal information.

- **Certain children are more vulnerable to abuse than others**. Such children include those with disabilities, children who are homeless and those who, for one reason or another, are separated from their parents or other family members and who depend on others for their care and protection. The same categories of abuse – neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse – are applicable, but may take a slightly different form. For example, abuse may take the form of deprivation of basic rights, harsh disciplinary regimes or the inappropriate use of medications or physical restraints
- **Neglect** is as potentially fatal as physical abuse. It can cause delayed physical, psychological and emotional development, chronic ill-health and significant long-term damage. It may also precede, or co-exist with, other forms of abuse and must be acted upon.
- **Child abuse is not restricted to any socio-economic group, gender or culture**. All signs must be considered in the wider social and family context. However, serious deficits in child safety and welfare transcend cultural, social and ethnic norms, and must elicit a response.
- **Challenging behaviour** by a child or young person should not render them liable to abuse. Children in certain circumstances may present management problems. This should not leave them vulnerable to harsh disciplinary measures or neglect of care.
- Section 176 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 introduced the criminal charge of **reckless endangerment of children**.
- Any professional who suspects child abuse should inform the parents/carers if a report is to be submitted to the Children and Family Social Services of the

HSE or to An Garda Síochána, unless doing so is likely to endanger the child.

- **No undertakings regarding secrecy can be given.** Those working with a child and family should make this clear to all parties involved, although they can be assured that all information will be handled taking full account of legal requirements.
- The **Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998** makes provision for the protection from civil liability of persons who have communicated child abuse ‘reasonably and in good faith’ to designated officers of the HSE or to any member of An Garda Síochána (see Appendix 11 for a list of HSE designated officers). This protection applies to organisations as well as to individuals. This means that even if a communicated suspicion of child abuse proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the person who communicated the concern had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report.
- **Teachers** are particularly well placed to observe and monitor children for signs of abuse. They are the main care-givers to children outside the family context and have regular contact with children in the school setting. Teachers have a general duty of care to ensure that arrangements are in place to protect children and young people from harm. In this regard, young people need to be facilitated to develop their self-esteem, confidence, independence of thought and the necessary skills to cope with possible threats to their personal safety, both within and outside the school.
- **If a child discloses to a teacher** or to other school staff that he or she is being harmed by a parent/carer or any other person, the person who receives that information should listen carefully and supportively. This applies equally where the child implies that he or she is at risk of being harmed by a parent/carer or any other person. It also applies equally if a parent/carer or any other person discloses that he or she has harmed, or is at risk of harming, a child. The child should not be interviewed formally; the teacher or other staff member should obtain only necessary relevant facts if and when clarification is needed. **Confidentiality must never be promised to a person making a**

**disclosure** subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Acts and the requirement to report to the Children and Family Social Services of the HSE must be explained in a supportive manner. The discussion should be recorded accurately and the record retained securely. **The teacher or other staff member should then inform the Principal or designated person** who is responsible for reporting the matter to the Children and Family Social Services of the HSE, or in the event of an emergency and the unavailability of the HSE, to An Garda Síochána.

## **Signs and Symptoms to Look Out For**

### **Child neglect should be suspected in cases of:**

- abandonment or desertion;
- children persistently being left alone without adequate care and supervision;
- malnourishment, lacking food, inappropriate food or erratic feeding;
- lack of warmth;
- lack of adequate clothing;
- lack of protection and exposure to danger, including moral danger or lack of supervision appropriate to the child's age;
- persistent failure to attend school;
- non-organic failure to thrive, i.e. child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also to emotional deprivation;
- failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical problems;
- exploited, overworked.

### **Emotional Abuse**

- rejection;
- lack of praise and encouragement;
- lack of comfort and love;
- lack of attachment;
- lack of proper stimulation (e.g. fun and play);
- lack of continuity of care (e.g. frequent moves);
- serious over-protectiveness;
- inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g. locking in bedrooms);
- family conflicts and/or violence;
- every child who is abused sexually, physically or neglected is also emotionally abused;
- inappropriate expectations of a child's behaviour, relative to his/her age and stage of development.

### **Physical Abuse**

- bruises (see below for more detail);
- fractures;
- swollen joints;
- burns/scalds(see below for more detail);
- abrasions/lacerations;
- haemorrhages (retinal, subdural);
- damage to body organs;
- poisonings – repeated (prescribed drugs, alcohol);
- failure to thrive;
- coma/unconsciousness;
- death.

### **Signs of Sexual Abuse**

- bleeding from the vagina/anus;
- difficulty/pain in passing urine/faeces;
- an infection may occur secondary to sexual abuse, which may or may not be a definitive sexually transmitted disease. Professionals should be informed if a child has a persistent vaginal discharge or has warts/rash in genital area;
- noticeable and uncharacteristic change of behaviour;
- hints about sexual activity;
- age-inappropriate understanding of sexual behaviour;
- inappropriate seductive behaviour;
- sexually aggressive behaviour with others;
- uncharacteristic sexual play with peers/toys;
- unusual reluctance to join in normal activities that involve undressing, e.g. games/swimming.

### **Signs of Abuse in children 0-10**

- mood change, e.g. child becomes withdrawn, fearful, acting out;
- lack of concentration, e.g. change in school performance;
- bed wetting, soiling;
- psychosomatic complaints, pains, headaches;
- skin disorders;
- nightmares, changes in sleep patterns;
- school refusal;

- separation anxiety;
- loss of appetite;
- isolation.

### **Signs of Abuse in children 10+**

- mood change, e.g. depression, failure to communicate;
- running away;
- drug, alcohol, solvent abuse;
- self-mutilation;
- suicide attempts;
- delinquency;
- truancy;
- eating disorders;
- isolation.

### Useful Web Addresses:

An Garda Síochána	<a href="http://www.garda.ie">www.garda.ie</a>
Department of Education and Skills	<a href="http://www.education.ie">www.education.ie</a>
Department of Health and Children	<a href="http://www.dohc.ie">www.dohc.ie</a>
Department of Justice and Law Reform	<a href="http://www.justice.ie">www.justice.ie</a>
Health Information and Quality Authority	<a href="http://www.hiqa.ie">www.hiqa.ie</a>
Health Service Executive	<a href="http://www.hse.ie">www.hse.ie</a>
Office of the Attorney General	<a href="http://www.attorneygeneral.ie">www.attorneygeneral.ie</a>
Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs	<a href="http://www.omcya.ie">www.omcya.ie</a>
Oireachtas of Ireland	<a href="http://www.oireachtas.ie">www.oireachtas.ie</a>
Ombudsman for Children's Office	<a href="http://www.oco.ie">www.oco.ie</a>
UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights	<a href="http://www.ohchr.org">www.ohchr.org</a>