



Child Protection Policy

In Sandymount Park Educate Together Secondary School (ETSS), we strive to create a vibrant, welcoming school community in which every student feels a sense of belonging. Our aim is to become a school of teaching and learning excellence where students will flourish; enabled to reach their full potential whilst becoming confident, considerate, active members of society. We focus on providing students with opportunities to develop their own identity, both as individuals and as learners and to build strong bonds with others and the wider world.

Our values include: Kindness, Respect, Empathy, Hard Work, Participation, Curiosity, Creativity, Democracy, Community.

Ratified: August 2020
Review date: August 2021

Introduction

The Board of Management of Sandymount Park ETSS recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and must be reflected in all school policies, practices and activities.

In accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skill's Circular 0065/2011 Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, Sandymount Park ETSS, under the auspices of Educate Together has accepted the following child protection policy:

- The Board of Management of Sandymount Park ETSS 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. This will also be in accordance with Children First 'National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children' 2011.
- The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Paula Mulhall (Principal)
- The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Brian O'Malley (Deputy Principal)
- In its policies, practices and activities, Sandymount Park ETSS 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.

- Other relevant policies and procedures

Garda Vetting Policy (Relevant Circular: 0031/2016)

Since April 29th, 2016, The Vetting Act has outlined the statutory vetting obligations on school authorities. It requires that a school authority must not; other than where certain exemptions (which are set out at section 6.4 of the circular) apply, contract, permit or place a person to



undertake relevant work or activities prior to the school authority receiving a vetting disclosure from the Bureau in respect of that person.

Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers

Teachers are expected to act in accordance with the Code of Professional Conduct, as defined by the Teaching Council: <http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Publications/Fitness-To-Teach/Code-of-Professional-Conduct-for-Teachers1.pdf> (updated second edition 2016)

Induction of Teachers and Ancillary Staff

The DLP will be responsible for informing all new teachers and ancillary staff of:

- The school's Child Protection Policy
- The school's Child Protection Reporting Procedures (Appendix 1) and relevant contact numbers (Appendix 2)
- The school's internal Safeguarding Children protocols (Appendix 3)
- The Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools
- The Children First Guidelines (2011).

Anti-Bullying Policy

Bullying behaviour is not tolerated at Sandymount Park ETSS. Students are reminded of this at the beginning of each academic school year when Class Tutors explain to them exactly what bullying behaviour is. Tutors will also explain the rights and responsibilities of all members of the school community and our duty to protect each other's physical and mental wellbeing from injury. This means that anyone who knows that bullying or unkind behaviour is happening is expected to tell a staff member. The supports and consequences for victims and bullies are also explained.

The school uses a Code of Behaviour which focuses on teaching and reinforcing positive behaviour and emphasizes a restorative approach. Lessons on this issue are dealt with in Social Personal & Health Education, Ethical Education and through occasional events. Positive behaviour is promoted, encouraged and supported through our student support system involving teachers, tutors, progress leaders, guidance counsellor, deputy principal and principal.

Attendance

With regards to Child Protection, we will pay particular attention to trends in nonattendance. We will also monitor nonattendance in correlation with signs of neglect/ physical/ emotional abuse.

Internet Safety

Child protection concerns are also addressed in the school's Acceptable Usage Policy and the Anti-bullying Policy. This former policy deals with issues relating to use of the Internet and



devices at school, such as access or use of children’s photos or names on the school website. Other related issues include: iPad/Mobile/Camera Phones, Handheld game devices & etc.

Social, Personal & Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships & Sexuality Education (RSE)

All ten modules of the post-primary SPHE programme delivered in Junior Cycle contribute towards the physical, mental and emotional health and well-being of the young person. RSE is delivered to students during SHPE at Junior Cycle and at Senior Cycle through Ethics and Social Education. The modules on personal safety, emotional health, and relationships and sexuality are particularly relevant to child welfare and protection.

Confidentiality

All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse and neglect should be shared only on a “need to know” basis in the interests of the child. The test is whether or not the person has any legitimate involvement or role in dealing with the issue.

However, giving information to those who need to have that information, for the protection of a child who may have been abused or neglected, or is being abused and neglected, or is at risk of abuse or neglect is not a breach of confidentiality.

Sandymount Park ETSS Board of Management has ensured that the necessary policies and protocols, as appropriate, are in place in respect of each of the above listed items.

- This policy has been made available to school personnel, along with relevant contact numbers and forms, as well as to the Parents’ Association. It is readily accessible to parents on our website. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

- This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year, using the Department’s Review Checklist (Appendix 4). These reviews will lead to Action Plans.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 19th August 2020

Date of next review: August 2021

Vaessa Barcroft,
Chairperson BOM

Date

Paula Mulhall,
Principal

Date



Appendix 1

Child Protection Reporting Procedures

If a member of staff should receive a report of a Child Protection issue

You should:

- Listen compassionately
- Use open, non-specific questions where, what is being reported is unclear
- Make a careful record of the report, using the young person's own words
- If the person reporting is an adult, invite him/her to provide a written account of the matter
- Indicate what will happen next
- Report the matter immediately to the Designated Liaison Person (The Principal)
- **Keep the matter strictly confidential**

You should not:

- Question the person reporting, other than to seek clarification
- Make any judgemental statements
- Give any undertaking of secrecy
- Start to investigate

The DLP will decide whether or not to report the matter to TUSLA/HSE/Gardaí. Should the DLP decide to report the allegation, s/he will be led by their expert advice. Whether the DLP decides not to report the allegation or not, the member of staff who reported the matter will be given a written statement as to why action has/has not been taken.

The member of staff should also be advised that, if he/she remains concerned about the situation, he/she is free to consult with or report to the HSE (section 3.8.1 of Children First). He/she should use the Standard Reporting Form, which accompanies this policy. (Please refer to Section 1.10 of this document regarding the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998.)

The member of staff who reports an allegation to the Designated Liaison Person may be asked to attend a Child Protection Conference.

The DLP will inform the Board of Management of the existence of referrals made to the HSE.

A member of staff reporting an allegation or suspicion in good faith has the legal protection of qualified privilege at common law and is also protected under 'The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act' 1998. The Freedom of Information Acts and the Data Protection Acts will apply to records.



Key Reporting Point: If you have concerns, tell the DLP, who must tell you if s/he has reported to TUSLA. If you're unhappy with the response, you can contact them directly yourself. Reporting in good faith, is protected by law.

Template letter informing a staff that a Report was made to the HSE

Date

Dear Teacher A

Following your report on (Date) regarding (Student Y). A report was made to the HSE on (Date).

Thank you for your care and attention to this case. The matter will now be handled by the HSE in the strictest confidence. We ask that you do not discuss the case with anyone else except for me or the DDLP. If further information is needed the social worker with responsibility for the case will contact, you.

Please store this letter securely with due regard to confidentiality.

Yours sincerely

Principal A, DLP



Appendix 2

Child Protection Agencies:

Contact Details

National Contacts for HSE Children and Family Services

www.hse.ie/go/socialworkers

HSE LoCall 1850 241850

Contacts

Tusla Child and Family Agency, Unit 9,
Nutmog Retail Park, Churchtown, Dublin 14. 01 9213400

Children First Information and Advice Officer **information only
Laura Nee Mobile: 087 7987854 E-mail: laura.nee@tusla.ie

Local and district Gardaí (if out of hours)
Irishtown Garda Station, 57 Irishtown Rd, Dublin. (01) 666 9600



Appendix 3

Safeguarding Children Protocols

In the Primary sector, teachers are guided towards every-day best practice using the *Stay Safe* programme. As no equivalent seems to exist at Post-Primary level, the following has been written as a non-exhaustive, evolving set of guidelines. It is partly adapted from the Stay Safe guidelines.

DVDs & Media

Staff will always ensure that any Video, Podcast, Media Clip shown to the students is age appropriate. Where a doubt exists with regard to the suitability of material, parents, principal and/or board of management should be consulted as necessary.

Trips and Outdoor Education

Teachers/School Staff will act in a responsible manner having regard to the fact that they are in the company of, and responsible for the care of young teenagers/young adults. Teachers will maintain the same standards of care as apply in a school situation. It is important that the rules (agreed by teachers, parents and students) are signed by students and are enforced by all teachers while away with students, including with regard to the consumption of alcohol, drugs, other stimulants etc. by students.

Visibility

Teachers will ensure that students are visible and supervised at all times. Students will not be allowed to spend time in classrooms and canteen unsupervised. Students will not be put out of class onto the corridor unsupervised.

Students travelling in staff cars

Teachers will not carry students alone in their cars. Public or private transport will be arranged to travel to and from curricular and extra-curricular events. If a child is ill parents/guardians will be contacted to come and collect their son/daughter.

Physical contact (taken from Stay Safe guidelines)

It is imperative that in all dealings with the children in our care a balance is struck between the rights of the child and the need for intervention. As a general rule, any physical contact between school personnel and the child should be in response to the needs of the child and not the needs of the adult.

While physical contact can be used to comfort, reassure or assist a child the following should be factors in assessing its appropriateness:

- is it acceptable to the child concerned
- is it open and not secretive
- is it appropriate to the age and developmental stage of the child
- is it necessary



School personnel should not do things of a personal nature for a child which the child can do for him/herself. Inappropriate physical contact also includes rough physical play and horseplay (tickling, wrestling etc). All children should be treated with equal respect – favouritism is not acceptable.

General Conduct (adapted from the Stay Safe guidelines)

School personnel should never engage in or allow:

- the use of inappropriate language or behaviours
- physical punishment of any kind
- shouting at students
- sexually provocative games or sexually suggestive comments about or to a child
- the use of sexually explicit or pornographic material etc.

Changing for Games/PE and Swimming (based on Stay Safe guidelines)

In activities that require children to change clothing, appropriate steps should be taken to ensure that reasonable protection is afforded to the children and staff members involved. Due regard needs to be given to the potential health, safety and abuse concerns. To that end the Board of Management should ensure that:

- a balance is struck between the child's right to privacy and adequate supervision with due regard to gender issues
- where children need assistance with changing, agreement should be reached between parents and staff as to how best those needs can be met
- boundaries may vary depending on needs of particular children and on the physical constraints
- parents are notified if volunteers are assisting children
- staff should avoid assisting children with anything of a personal nature that the child can do for him/herself
- a report of any incident be made to the principal, parents and Board of Management, as appropriate.

Should the presence of an adult become necessary in a changing area, it is preferable (where practicable) to have a second adult present also. (This is an additional comment to those in the Stay Safe guidelines)

Supervision of Children (taken from the Stay Safe programme- except the final sentence)

Supervision arrangements depend on the physical layout of the site, and the ages and the needs of children. School staff should have agreed arrangements for the recording of accidents or incidents that take place while children are under the supervision of school staff.

Whilst inadequate supervision can contribute to greater opportunities for peer abuse, bullying and victimisation; a balance should be struck between monitoring the students and giving them privacy.



Custody issues

Where schools are aware of a court order being in place which prevents someone from having access to a child, a copy of that order should be requested by the school.

In the event of the parent/guardian's non-compliance with the court order, the Gardaí should be summoned to enforce it.

One-to-one teaching (taken from the Stay Safe guidelines)

Provided it is deemed appropriate for an individual, one-to-one teaching may be provided. Schools need to weigh up the benefits of this against the possible disadvantages in relation to a child protection issue. Every effort should be made to ensure the protection of children and staff. It is crucial that clear boundaries are put in place regarding physical environment (e.g. vision panel in door), seating arrangements, proper timetabling etc.

If a child needs learning support or one-to-one teaching, parents should be advised of any arrangements in place.

Furthermore (in addition to the Stay Safe guidelines), Staff at Sandymount Park ETSS are aware of and follow the Teaching Council's *Code of Practice for Teachers* in their dealings with students; maintain professional distance, refer concerns when necessary and avoid unnecessary physical contact.

If a staff member/visiting professional such as Speech and Language therapist/ Occupational therapist needs to work/deal/communicate with students on a one-to-one basis, they are instructed to leave the classroom door open.

Visitor/Guest Speakers

In the first instance, teachers must seek the approval of the Principal, in order to invite visitors/ guest speakers into the school. Under no circumstances should they be left alone with children. The school (BOM/principal/teacher as appropriate) has a responsibility to check out the credentials of the visitor/guest speaker and to ensure that the content/material in use is appropriate. The Principal must determine if Garda Vetting is necessary, in accordance with Circular 0031/2016.

Secretarial staff will be made aware of visitors entering the school and will ascertain their intentions. Visitors will be required to sign in and out in a visitor's book.



Appendix 4

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.

	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'?	
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?	

Vaessa Barcroft,
Chairperson BOM

Date

Paula Mulhall,
Principal

Date



