

LISVERNANE NS



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Introductory Statement

The staff, parents and management of Lisvernane NS have developed and agreed this Policy in line with the current recommendations and guidelines relating to child abuse prevention and child protection guidelines. (Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children; Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools' Circular 0065/2011).

The Board of Management of Lisvernane NS 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.

The Board of Management has adopted and implemented fully and without modification the Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools as part of this overall Child Protection Policy.

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Creena O'Brien

The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Marian Kinahan

Where the DLP (Ms. Creena O'Brien) is unavailable for whatever reasons arrangements will be put in place for another nominated member of staff to assume her responsibility i.e. the Deputy DLP (Ms. Patricia English. During the period October 2017 up to June 2018 and in the absence of the Deputy DLP (Marian Kinahan) the Deputy Designated Liaison Person will be Mary Kelly.

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

Chairperson BoM:	087 9048559
Health Board	052 6177302/6177303 or 1850241850
Gardaí Tipperary Town	062 80670
Local Hospital	052 6177000
CAPP (Stay Safe Programme):	01 62063460

IMPORTANT ADDRESS: Túsla

South Tipperary Child Protection Services, Community Care Services
Western Road, Clonmel
052 6177302
052 6177303

In its Policies, practices and activities, Lisvernane NS will adhere to the following principles of best practice in child protection and welfare and the School will as follows:

- Recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations
- Fully co-operate with the relevant authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters
- Adopt safe practices to minimize the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children
- Develop a practice of openness with parents and encourage parental involvement in the education of their children
- Fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.

Aims of Policy

The aims of the Child Protection Policy are to:

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

Definition of Abuse

Child abuse can be categorized into four different types:

- Neglect
- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse

Definition of Neglect

Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults **(3.2 Children First)**

Definition of Emotional Abuse

Emotional Abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a caregiver and a child rather than in specific events or patterns of events. It occurs when a child's needs for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms **(3.3 Children First)**

Definition of Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his/her gratification or sexual arousal (**3.5 Children First**)

More details of each type of abuse is contained in **Appendix 1, p. 125, Children First**.

Guidelines for Recognising the Signs of Abuse (2.7 Children First)

The recognition of abuse normally runs along three stages:

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

Each of these stages is developed in Children First 2:2

HANDLING DISCLOSURES FROM CHILDREN (2.4 DES Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures)

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

- Listen and stay calm
- The experience of telling should be a positive one
- 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 overreact or comment
- Discussion should then be recorded accurately. The record should include reference to what was observed with sketches of physical injury where necessary. It should also record when the alleged incident took place. Records should be kept in a secure place.
- 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 (as far as possible 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

If the reporting person and/or the DLP are satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion/allegations, the procedures outlined in Children First must be adhered to. Standardised reporting forms should be used (DES Procedures Appendix 1)

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 the parents/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. Child Protection Report is mandatory at every B.O.M meeting.
- The DLP or Deputy DLP must never act without first attaining advice from Health Board

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)

Confidentiality (1.2 DES Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures)

All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse should be only shared on a need to know basis, in the interest of the child.

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

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

In emergency situations, where the Health Board cannot be contacted and the child appears at immediate and serious risk, an Garda Siochana should be contacted immediately.

Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending Health Board intervention

PROTECTION FOR PERSONS REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

(1.3 DES Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures: 2.4 Children First)

The protection for persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to any person who reports suspicions of child abuse reasonably and in

good faith to designated officers of Health Boards, or any member of an Garda Siochana. This means that even if a reported suspicion of child abuse proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the reporter had not acted reasonably and in good faith making the report.

QUALIFIED PRIVILEGE (1.4 DES Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures)

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

Qualified privilege arises where the person making the communication has a duty to do so or a right, or interest to protect the child and where the communication is made to a person with a similar duty, right or interest. The person making the report, acting in loco parentis, would be expected to act in the child's best interests and in making the report would be regarded as acting in such a manner. Privilege can be displaced only where it can be established that the person making the report acted maliciously.

Furthermore, those reporting a child's disclosure are not regarded as making an allegation as a matter of charge, but simply carrying out of their duty in good faith. They are not accusing or bringing a charge.

Freedom of Information Act 1997

- 1 DES Guidelines
- 2 Children First

Reports made to the Health Boards may be subject to provisions of Freedom of Information Act 1997, which enables members of public to obtain access to personal information relating to them which is in the possession of public bodies. However, the Act also provides that public bodies may refuse access to information obtained by them in confidence.

PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE THROUGH CURRICULAR PROVISION

- Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Stay Safe, Alive-O, Walk Tall, RSE Programme, Friends for Life, Zippy's Friends.
- Self Esteem enhancement programmes/activities – circle time, Healthy Lifestyle Week, Art therapy
- Parental involvement; parents are made aware of programmes taught in school. Parents also get feedback throughout the course of programmes e.g. Stay Safe and RSE worksheet completed in collaboration with parents.
- Whole school climate and ethos child friendly, supportive environment, display children's work/creativity, assemblies, adults modeling good behaviour, celebrating achievements, acknowledging effort and success.

STAFF TRAINING

Staff development and in service. The DLP will inform staff of current practices and relevant in service training courses; staff in-service in school on related topics.

Finally, in its policies, practices and activities, Lisvernane NS 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 cooperate 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 pupil with special needs.

This policy addresses the responsibilities of the school in the following areas:

- a) Prevention – curriculum provision
- b) Procedures - procedures for dealing with concerns / disclosures
- c) Practice - best practice in child protection

Links to other Policy / Planning areas:

The following list of policies is particularly relevant to child protection.

Prevention: SPHE curriculum, Strand Unit on ‘Safety and Protection’,

The School Code of Behaviour

RSE Policy

School Attendance Policy

Garda Vetting Policy

Pupil Attendance Strategy

Procedures: Anti-Bullying Policy.

Health and Safety Statement.

Practice: Swimming Code

Policy on School Trips

Mobile Phone Policy

Supervision/Playground Duty

Toileting/Intimate Care Policy

Website Policy

ICT/Acceptable Internet Usage Policy

Data Protection Policy

Healthy Eating Policy

Special Needs Policy

Prevention

The Stay Safe programme and R.S.E are the primary resources used in this school to provide education for children on abuse prevention. The SPHE Curriculum is implemented in full in the school. The Stay Safe Programme is taught as part of the schools' SPHE curriculum under the strand unit Safety and Protection.

The formal lessons of the programme will be taught in their entirety every year in accordance with the SPHE plan.

Staff will make every effort to ensure that the messages of the programme are reinforced whenever possible.

On enrolment of their child parents will be informed that the Stay Safe programme is in use in the school and a copy of the Stay Safe 'A Parent's Guide' provided.

Extra provision will be made if necessary for Special Needs Pupils by the Learning Resource Teacher in relation to support of the Stay Safe Programme (Awaiting Arrival of updated stay Safe and RSE Programme)

Procedures:

All staff (Teachers, SNAs, ancillary, secretarial, caretaking etc.) in this school will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in 'Children First and will receive copy of C.P.P.

National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children' and the Department of Education and Skills document, 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'.

All parents of Junior Infants pupils will receive a copy of the Child Protection Policy of Lisvernane NS. Thereafter the Parents Association are kept up to date with any changes in the said Policy.

Appendix 1 Child Protection Guidelines Checklist for School Employees

Appendix 2 List of Indicators – *from Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools Appendix 3*

Appendix 3 Reporting procedures for DLP - *from Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools*

The staff and management of this school have agreed:

- All concerns/ disclosures involving child protection/child welfare issues will be reported in the first instance to the DLP (deputy DLP where appropriate).
- Each report to the DLP will be dated and signed by the person making that report.
- **A strict adherence to maintaining confidentiality – information regarding concerns or disclosures of abuse should only be given on a 'need to know' basis.**

Activities/ Practice

The following areas have been considered by the staff and board of management of this school as areas of specific concern in relation to child protection. Following discussion and consultation the staff and board of management have agreed that the following practices be adopted.

a) Physical contact

Physical contact between school personnel and the child should always be in response to the needs of the child and not the needs of the adult.

While physical contact may be used to comfort, reassure or assist a child the following should be factors in determining it's appropriateness:

- It is acceptable to the child
- It is open and not secretive
- The age and developmental stage of the child

School personnel should avoid doing anything of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.

b) Visitors / Guest Speakers

Visitors/guest speakers should never be left alone with pupils. An SNA or Teacher will be in the room at all times with the visiting teacher. A basket will be put in place by the front door to receive post. Scheduled visits will be displayed on the Staff Notice board or Aladdin and staff will be notified of any visitors. The school (principal/teachers) has a responsibility to check out the credentials of the visitor/guest speaker and to ensure that the material in use by guests is appropriate. All scheduled and unscheduled visitors to the school (including parents, child minders etc) must report to the office on arrival. A visitors log will be put in place in the Reception Area. Staff on yard duty will direct them to the school office. The drop-off / pick-up of children throughout the teaching day will be processed through the school office. Collection and early release of pupils is recorded on Aladdin and is the responsibility of each teacher.

c) Children with specific toileting/intimate care needs:

In all situations where a pupil needs assistance with toileting /intimate care a meeting will be convened, after enrolment and before the child starts school, between parents/guardians, class teacher, special needs assistant, principal and if appropriate the pupil . The purpose of the meeting will be to ascertain the specific needs of the child and to determine how the school can best meet those needs. The staff to be involved in this care will be identified and provision will be made for occasions when the particular staff member involved are absent. A written copy of what has been agreed will be made and kept in the child's file.

Two members of staff will be present when dealing with intimate care/ toileting needs. Any deviation from the agreed procedure will be recorded and notified to the DLP and the parents/guardians.

d) Toileting accidents:

Clean underwear and suitable clothing will be kept in the school so that if a pupil has an 'accident' of this nature they will in the first instance be offered fresh clothing into which they can change. Ms Kelly will take charge of clothing recourses.

If the pupil for whatever reason cannot clean or change themselves the child will be assisted by two members of staff familiar to the child. In all such situations two members of staff should be present.

A record of all such incidents will be kept and principal and parents will be notified.

e) One to One teaching:

It is the policy in this school that one to one teaching is occasionally in the best interest of the child. Every effort will be made to ensure that this teaching takes place in an open environment in such situations. Work being carried out by special needs assistants will be carried out under the direction of the class teacher in an open environment.

f) Changing for Games/ PE/ Swimming:

Pupils will be expected to dress and undress themselves for games/PE/ swimming. Where assistance is needed this will be done in the communal areas and with the consent of parents. Under no circumstances will members of staff/ volunteers be expected to or allowed to dress/undress a child in a cubicle/private area. In such situations where privacy is required the parent/guardian of the child will be asked to assist the child.

Refer to **Swimming Policy**.

g) Internet Safety and Mobile Phones:

Refer to **ICT / Acceptable Usage Policy**
Mobile Phone Policy

h) While children are being measured for band uniforms etc. there will always be two adults present and every effort will be made to have a minimum of two children present at all times.

i) Record Keeping:

All D.L.P. files will be stored in a secure place for confidentiality and case details will not identify the particular child. Refer to **Data Protection Policy**

j) Behaviour:

Children are encouraged to play cooperatively and inappropriate behavior will be addressed under our Code of Behaviour. If an incident occurs which we consider to be of a sexualised nature, we will notify the DLP who will record it and respond to it appropriately.

k) Bullying

If the behaviour involved is of a sexualised nature or regarded as being particularly abusive, then the matter will be referred to the DLP

l) Visibility

Teachers will ensure that children are visible in the school playground. Children will not be allowed to spend time in classrooms or toilets where they would not be under adult supervision. They are not to leave the premises and/or playground or to engage with unauthorised adults who are outside of the School and/or Playground

Dissemination of the Policy:

A copy of this policy will be made available to all school personnel, the Parents' Association and is readily accessible to all parents on request. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested. New parents joining the school receive a copy of this policy as part of the enrolment process. The

Deputy Principal will inform new staff members about Lisvernane NS Child Protection Policy and ensure that they receive a copy.

Allegations Against School Employees.

The most important consideration for the Chairperson, Board of Management or the DLP is the safety and protection of the child. However, employees also have a right to protection against claims, which are false or malicious.

As employers, the Board of Management should also seek legal advice as the circumstances can vary from one case to another.

1. The Reporting Procedure.
2. The Procedure for dealing with the Employee.

The DLP has responsibility for reporting the matter to the Health Board. The Chairperson, Board of Management has responsibility, acting in consultation with his/her Board, for addressing the employment issues. If the allegation is against the DLP, the Chairperson of the Board of Management will assume the responsibility for reporting the matter to the Health Board.

Reporting.

When an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee, the DLP should immediately act in accordance with the procedures outlined in "Child Protection."

A written statement of the allegation should be sought from the person/agency making the report. The DLP should always inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

School employees, other than DLP who receive allegations against another school employee, should immediately report the matter to the DLP. School employees who form suspicions regarding conduct of another school employee should consult with the DLP. The procedures outlined in will then be followed.

The chairperson of the Board and the DLP should make the employee aware privately,

- a) That an allegation has been made against him/her.
- b) The nature of the allegation.
- c) Whether or not the Health Board or Gardaí has been/will be/must be/should be informed.

The employee should be given a copy of the written allegation and any other relevant documentation. The employee should be requested to respond to the allegation in writing to the Board of Management within a specified period and told that this may be passed to the Gardaí, Health Board, and legal advisers.

The priority in all cases is that no child be exposed to unnecessary risk. Therefore, as a matter of urgency, the Chairperson should take any necessary protective

measures. These measures should be proportionate to the level of risk and should not unreasonably penalise the employee in anyway unless to protect the child.

If the nature of the allegations warrants immediate action in the Chairperson's opinion, the Board of Management should be convened to consider the matter. The Board will consider feedback if any has been received from the Health Board, Gardaí or relevant source. This may result in the Board of Management directing that the employee absent him/herself from the school forthwith while the matter is being investigated (Administrative leave). When the Board of Management is unsure as to whether this should occur, advice should be sought from the Gardaí and/or the Child Care Manager of the Health Board and the Legal advisers to the Board of Management.

Administrative Leave

Should the Board of Management direct that the employee absent him/herself as above, such absence of the employee would be regarded as administrative leave of absence with pay and not suspension and would not imply any degree of guilt. The D.E.S. should be immediately informed.

Board of Management

The chairperson should inform the Board of Management of all the details and remind the members of their serious responsibility to maintain strict confidentiality on all matters relating to the issue and the principals of due process and natural justice.

Review and Monitoring

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Board of Management on an annual basis and when the need arises (in accordance with the Checklist for Annual review of the Child Protection Policy – appendix 2: Circular 65/2011). The Board of Management will ensure that adequate training and support is provided for all staff. The Principal will inform school personnel when the review has taken place. Written notification that the review has taken place will be provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and to the Department. All persons employed by the Board of Management of Lisvernane NS will sign a form to confirm that they have received and read a copy of our Children Protection Policy. The name of the DLP and other relevant support services are displayed in a prominent position in our school. At each meeting of the Board of Management, the agenda will include an item on Child Protection.

Helpline Numbers

**National Adult Counselling Service
1800 477477**

**INTO Employee Assistance
1800 411 057**

**One in Four
01 6624070**

**Rape Crisis Centre
1800 77 88 88**

**HSE (Advice on All Areas relating to Child Abuse)
1850 24 18 50**

**South Tipperary Child Protection Services,
Community Care Services,
Western Road,
Clonmel
052 6177302
052 6177303**