

ROCKBORO PRIMARY SCHOOL AND PRE SCHOOL CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Rockboro primary and pre-school is committed to safeguarding the well-being of all the children with whom our staff come into contact. This policy on child protection is in accordance with “Children First – The National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children” 2011. It is also in accordance with the principles of good practice for the protection of children and young people. We promote the rights of the child to be protected, that all children should be listened to and have their views taken into consideration.

PRINCIPLE:

This policy is underpinned by the Childcare (Pre-school Services) Regulations 2016 and Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

PURPOSE:

This policy applies to all employees and volunteers who have contact with children and young people on our premises or through their work on behalf of the childcare service.

It is important to ensure all employees have an ability to recognise abuse, to ensure that all staff must attend child protection courses run by local city childcare.

DEALING WITH CHILD PROTECTION WELFARE CONCERNS:

All employees and volunteers of Rockboro Primary School and Pre-school will be made aware of and be familiar with the childcare services child protection policy through an in – house induction, on-going training and will sign up to the overall child protection policy of the childcare service.

The designated liaison person acts as a liaison with outside agencies and a resource person to any staff member or volunteer who has child protection concerns. The designated liaison person is responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions to the Child and Family Agency-Tusla or An Garda Síochána.

DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON: Susan Dwane (Principal) ; Moira Heffernan (Preschool Manager)

If any staff member has a concern relating to the welfare of a child in their care, they should inform the designation liaison person.

The designated liaison person will provide information on child protection. They will liaise with the HSE Children and Family Services/An Garda Siochana and other Agencies where appropriate. They will also coordinate any action to be taken if there is concern about a child's welfare.

Under no circumstances should a child be left in a situation that exposes him or her to harm or of risk to harm pending Tusla intervention. In the event of an emergency where you think a child is in immediate danger and contact cannot be made with Tusla, the Gardai should be contacted. This may be done through any Garda station.

Examples of reasonable grounds for concern:

- Specific indication from the child that he/she has been abused.
- An account by the person who saw the child being abused.
- Evidence such as an injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in another way.
- Consistent indication over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

If the designated liaison person is uncertain about an allegation, they should contact the Child and Family Agency – Tusla for informal advice relation to the allegation, concern or disclosure.

The designated liaison person will ensure that the parents/carers are informed and that a report/referral has been made to Tusla, unless to do so would likely endanger the child.

After consultation with the duty social worker, the designated liaison person will take one of two options:

Report the allegation, concern or disclosure to the relevant authority using the standard reporting form from Children First and in the case of out of hours or immediate danger contact An Garda Siochana.

In a case where the service decides not to report concerns to Tusla or An Garda Siochana, the employee or volunteer who raised the concern should be given a clear written statement of the reasons why the childcare service is not taking such action. The employee or volunteer should be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free to consult with, or report to Tusla or An Garda Siochana. The provisions of the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 apply once they communicate 'reasonably and in good faith' (see paragraph 3.101 of Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children)

In making a report on suspected or actual child abuse, the designated liaison person must ensure that the first priority is always for the safety and welfare of the child and that no child is ever left in a situation that could place them in immediate danger.

HOW TO MAKE A REPORT:

If the report is in relation to the safety and welfare of a child, the report should be made to the designated liaison person.

The safety and well-being of the child must take priority. Reports should be made without delay to the Child and Family Agency – Tusla, local health office area where the child resides. A suspicion, which is not supported by an objective indication of abuse or neglect, would not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern. However these suspicions should be recorded or noted internally by the designated liaison person as future suspicions may lead to the decision to make a report and earlier suspicions may provide important information for the statutory child protection agency on An Garda Síochána.

REPORTS CAN BE MADE BY:

- Children/young people
- Parents/guardians
- Employees, volunteers of the service.
- Other advocates on behalf of children.
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HOW TO HANDLE A REPORT OF ABUSE BY A CHILD/YOUNG PERSON:

In the event of a child disclosing an incident of abuse it is essential that this is dealt with sensitively and professionally by the employee/volunteer involved. In such circumstances the employee/volunteer should:

- React calmly
- Listen carefully and attentively, take the young person seriously.
- Reassure the young person that they have taken the right action in talking to you.
- Do NOT promise to keep anything a secret.

PROTECTIONS FOR PERSONS REPORTING CHILD ABUSE ACT 1998*

Rockboro primary and pre-school wish to draw the attention of the staff and volunteers to the Act-Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse 'reasonable and in good faith' to the HSE or Garda Siochana Section 3(1)of the act states.

*A person who, apart from this section, would be so liable shall not be liable in damages in respect of the communication, whether in writing or otherwise, by him or her to an appropriate person of his or her opinion that –

A child has been or is being assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused, or, a child's health, development or welfare has been or is being avoidable impaired or neglected, unless it is proved that he or she has not acted reasonable and in good faith in forming that opinion and communicating it to the appropriate person.

ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON

The designated liaison person in Rockboro Pre-school has the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the child protection and welfare policy is promoted and implemented.

The role of the designated liaison person involves the following duties:

- To be familiar with 'Children First'. To be responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the child protection and welfare policy.
- The Designated liaison person provides support to staff members who are dealing with/have dealt with a child protection concern or disclosure.
- To receive reports of alleged/suspected or actual child abuse and act on these in accordance with the guidelines.
- To ensure that training is provided for all new and existing staff on the child protection policy.
- To ensure that support is put in place for the young person, employees or volunteers in cases of allegations being made.
- To keep up to date and undertake relevant training on child protection.
- To review the policy and procedures on child protection and amend as appropriate.

CONFIDENTIALITY

In matters of child abuse, an employee should never promise to keep secret any information which is divulged. It should be explained to the child that this information cannot be kept secret but only those who need to know in order to safeguard the child will be told.

It is essential in reporting any case of alleged/suspected abuse that the principle of confidentiality applies. The information should only be shared on a need to know basis which means sharing information with persons who have a need to know in order to safeguard a child and is not a breach of confidentiality and the number of people that need to be informed should be kept to a minimum.

If an employee has any doubt as to whether a report should be made they should consult with the childcare services designated liaison person.

RECORD KEEPING

Under the Data Protection Act every person has a right to establish the existence of personal data, to have access to any such data relating to them and to have inaccurate data rectified or erased. The information must be kept for lawful purposes. All data in relation to child protection records collected must be stored in a safe and confidential manner in a secure locked cabinet. Only the designated liaison person and the deputy designated liaison person will have access to this information.

RECRUITMENT AND CHILD PROTECTION

All advertisements will reflect the services commitment to equality. All applicants will be provided with :

- Details of the childcare service
- A job description and person specification
- An Application Form

A minimum of two references (one from the most recent employer) will be taken up followed by a telephone reference. References should be in writing with none from family or relatives. Successful candidates will be offered a contract of employment in accordance with employment legislation requirements and each contract will include a probationary period. All employees' contracts will include signing up to the Rockboro School Child Protection Policy.

Rockboro primary and pre-school will not employ, contract or involve as volunteer, any person to work with children who has a criminal conviction for violent crime, sexual crime, drugs related offences or any other offences deemed inappropriate in relation to work with children.

All workers employed, contracted to work or volunteering to work with children through Rockboro Pre-school will be required to be Garda Vetted.

MANAGEMENT OF STAFF

Rockboro has weekly meetings with staff. Informal support and supervision is available to staff members as requested or as required. All staff attend all child protection training offered by Cork City Childcare.

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST AN EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER

Upon an allegation being made, the designated liaison person shall notify the Principal and committee chairperson. If the allegation is related to these people, the designated liaison person will notify the board of management of the allegation. If the allegation is related to the designated liaison person then the deputy designated liaison person will notify the principal/committee chairperson. If an allegation is made against an employee, the designated liaison person shall liaise with the deputy liaison person and decide who deals with the employee/volunteer. Where possible these should be dealt with by two different people. There are two different procedures that are followed:

1. The reporting procedure in respect of the child

The safety of the child is the first priority of the service and all necessary measures will be taken to ensure that the child and other children are safe. The designated liaison person will deal with the procedure involving the child and the reporting to Tusla, the child and family agency.

2. The procedure for dealing with the worker

The designated liaison person and the principal/committee chairperson will work in close cooperation with each other and the HSE, Tusla and An Garda Síochána. If a formal report is being made, the manager/committee chairperson will notify the employee that an allegation has been made and what the nature of the allegation is. The employee has a right to respond to this and this response should be documented and kept on file. It will ensure that the principle of 'natural justice' is applied whereby a person is considered innocent until proven otherwise. The manager/committee chairperson will suspend the employee with pay (where appropriate). In the case where the worker is not suspended, the level of supervision will be increased. The manager/committee chairperson will liaise closely with the HSE children and family services and An Garda Síochána to ensure that the actions taken will not undermine or frustrate any

investigations. The protective measures which can be taken to ensure the safety of children and young people can include the following:

- Suspension of duties of the person accused.
- Reassignment of duties where the accused will not have contact with children/young people.
- Working under increased supervision during the period of the investigation.

DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse is complicated and can take different forms. However it usually consists of one or more of the following signs and symptoms:

Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission where the child suffers significant harm of 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. 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. Neglect usually 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 deprived of intellectual stimulation.

Emotional abuse is normally found in the relationship between a care-giver and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Emotional abuse can be manifested in terms of the child's behavioural, cognitive or physical functioning eg anxious attachment, non-organic failure to thrive, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement and oppositional behaviour.

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.
- 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

Physical abuse to a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction, or lack of interaction, which is reasonable within the control of the 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, chopping or hair pulling
- Terrorising with threats
- Observing violence
- Deliberate poisoning
- Suffocation
- Fabricated/induced illness
- Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.

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.
- Sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal.
- Sexual exploitation of a child, which includes inciting encouraging propositioning or other sexual acts. Sexual exploitation also occurs when a child is involved in the exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, or any 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 yrs. for both boys and girls. An Garda Síochána will deal with the criminal aspects of the case under the relevant legislation.

Reckless Endangerment is when a person of authority over a child or an abuser intentionally or recklessly endangers a child by:

- Causing or permitting any child to be placed or left in a situation which creates a substantial risk to the child.
- Failing to take reasonable steps to protect a child from such a risk while knowing that the child is in such a situation.

This policy was adopted by Rockboro Primary and Pre-school on _____

Signed by _____