

# **Meán Scoil Nua an Leith-Triúigh**

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## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY OF Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh**

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 schools policies, practices and activities. Also, in accordance with the requirements of the D.E.S. 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary schools' , the Board of Management of Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh has agreed the following child protection policy:

The B.O.M. has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the Departments 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary schools' as part of this overall child protection policy.

The Designated Liaison Person is Aodán Mac Gearailt

The Deputy Designated Liaison Person is Aoileann Nic Gearailt

In its policies, practices and activities, Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh will adhere to the following principles of best practice in child protection and welfare:

- 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 that involves consulting them about issues that concern their children, and encouraging them to get involved with the school wherever possible.

Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh is committed to the care and protection of its students and all who work in the school. Therefore vetting of school personnel is carried out to the highest standards of good practice. This vetting process is conducted by the principal on behalf of the school in conjunction with the teaching council, the J.M.B. , and with the garda vetting unit.

It is also school policy to provide a Safe and Healthy work environment for all employees and to meet our duties to students, employees, contractors and visitors. The B.O.M. acknowledges its role in protecting the safety, health and welfare of all people employed in the organisation and affected by the workplace. We are committed to implementing safe work systems and methods to ensure the safety, health and welfare of all. The B.O.M. understands its legal obligations and its commitment to comply with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2007, and any other legislation such as the General Applications Regulations 1993 or as required under EU Law.

Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh therefore recognises its obligations to provide the following:

A safe place to work, Safe systems of work, Appropriate training and information to ensure safety, Preparation and revision of emergency plans, Prevention of risk to health from any activity and Providing hygiene facilities as appropriate.

In its policies, practices and activities Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh will adhere to the following principals 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 possibilities of harm or accidents happening to children and protect workers from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave them open to accusations of abuse or neglect.
- Develop a practice of openness with parents and encourage parental involvement in education of their children ; and
- Fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.

A copy of the College's child protection policy which includes the names of the DLP and Deputy DLP shall be made available to all school personnel and must be readily accessible to parents on request.

The child Protection policy of Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh shall be formally adopted by the Board of Management.

## The Role of Staff

All staff (teachers, SNA's, Ancillary Staff, Secretarial, Caretaking, etc...) in Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns and disclosures as outlined below (as per the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2011)

The Staff and Board of Management have identified the following areas of specific concerns in relation to Child Protection. Following discussion and consultation the Staff and Board of Management have agreed that the following practices be adopted.

- Physical Contact is avoided
- Teachers must be present where possible when visitors/guest speakers are in the school/classroom.
- Learners with specific toileting/intimate care needs where a child has intimate care needs, written procedures must be in place, signed and agreed by both parents and SNA.
- In the event of toileting accidents, parents are rung; if uncontactable, emergency numbers are rung and parents arrange someone to change child.
- One to one teaching takes place with high visibility in a room with glass panel in door and blinds open, sitting on opposite side of a desk.
- Changing for Games/Swimming: Children change in separate cubicles for swimming. Teachers are always supervising in dressing room. Children are not allowed to change in these dressing rooms in pairs or groups. Children change in toilets before football training or going to matches.
- All new staff must be vetted. Vetting should be reviewed every two/three years.
- Code of Behaviour, Anti Bullying Policy, school rules and positive encouragement will all be enforced by staff.
- Learners must be supervised at all times; in classrooms, at break time. This is facilitate by Supervision Policy
- Permission is sought on enrolment in relation to children's photos being taken, displayed on school website or on any school literature and in relation to Acceptable Use Policy.

## **The Role of the Board of Management**

- A review of the school's child protection Policy will be conducted annually by the Board of Management.
- As part of the annual review of the school's child protection policy, the Board of Management must specifically review the school's implementation of the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'. A checklist that shall be used as an aid to conducting the annual review. See Appendix. The Board of Management may add other items to this checklist that are of particular relevance to the different situations in questions.
- Following the review, the Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh authority shall put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement identified by the review and arrange for these to be dealt with as quickly as possible.

## **Child abuse prevention and Curricular Provisions**

- It is the responsibility of all staff members of Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh to contribute to the prevention of child abuse and neglect through curricular provisions. In that context the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme is a mandatory part of the curriculum for all students in Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh.
- RES is provided in Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh for all pupils. Certain topics of the RES Curriculum are covered by an RES Guardian. The lessons will be strictly adhered to by the RES Guardian. Parents can decide to opt out of this talk if they wish but they must understand that the onus is completely on them to deliver this information to their children.

## **Recruitment Procedures and Garda Vetting**

Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh will ensure compliance with the Departments circulars and any other legal requirements in relation to Garda vetting of school personnel and other persons who have or may have unsupervised access to children of vulnerable adults. People employed in our school or working with children or vulnerable adults will be vetted in compliance with the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016.

- Whether a person is being considered for employment or other roles within Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh comprehensive procedures for the checking of the person's suitability to work with children or vulnerable adults are essential element of child protection practice.

- Vetting will not take the place of normal recruitment procedures and through recruitment procedures which are an essential element of good child protection will be practiced. Vetting will be used as part of those procedures. These will apply to all those being employed in the school, be it on a teaching or non-teaching basis.
- The Board of Management of Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh knows that effective child protection depends on the skills, knowledge and values of personnel working with children and families, as well as co-operation between agencies (interagency) and within agencies (intra-agency). The Board of Management of the school will ensure that all school personnel and Board of Management members have the necessary familiarity with these procedures to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities therein.

### **Confidentiality**

- All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse and neglect should be shared only on a 'need to know' basis in the interest of the learner. If the person has no legitimate involvement or role in dealing with the issue then this information will not be shared. This information will at all times be confidential and will not be given to a third party who imparts information
- If/when the Designated Liaison Person is submitted a report to the HSE or An Garda Síochána they will inform a parent/carer unless doing so is likely to endanger the learner or place the learner at further risk. A record shall be made of the information communicated to the parent /carer by means of a meeting.
- Any sensitive/child protected information that is recorded in relation to any learner is stored carefully and safely in a locked filing cabinet in the office. The information will always be kept in a sealed envelope and the learners name will not be written on this envelope. The learner will only be identifiable through a number.
- A decision not to inform a parent/carer shall be briefly recorded together with the reasons for not doing so. This record shall be made and retained by the DLP. In cases where school personnel have concerns about a child, but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person shall seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.
- It is a matter for the HSE to assess and investigate suspected abuse and neglect and determine what action to take, including informing An Garda Síochána.
- 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 will include the number of all such cases and this will be recorded in the minutes of the board meeting.

- In cases of emergency, where a learner appears to be at immediate and serious risk, and it is not possible to make contact with HSE, An Garda Síochána shall be contacted immediately. Under no circumstances should a learner be left in a dangerous situation pending HSE intervention.

### **Qualified Privilege**

- Qualified Privilege arises where the person making the communication has a duty to do so, or right, or interest to protect the child and where the communication is made to a person with 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 displayed only where it can be established that the person making the report acted maliciously. Furthermore, those reporting a child's disclosure or concerns about a child's behaviour or welfare are not regarded as making an allegation as a matter of charge, but simply carrying out their duty in good faith. They are not accusing or bringing a charge.

### **Definition and Recognition of Child Abuse**

There are commonly three stages in the identification of child abuse.

These are: -

1. Considering the possibility
2. Looking out for signs of abuse
3. Recording of information

## Categories of Abuse

- All School Personnel in Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh are familiar with signs and behaviours that may be indicative of child abuse.
- Child Abuse can be categorised into four types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time.

**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. Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point.

**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.

**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 of emotional abuse of children include:

- (a) the imposition of negative attributes on a child, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;
- (b) conditional parenting in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviours or actions;
- (c) emotional unavailability of the child's parent/carer;
- (d) unresponsiveness of parent/carer and/or inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of the child;
- (e) premature imposition of responsibility on the child;
- (f) unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the child's capacity to understand something or to behave and control himself or herself in a certain way;
- (g) under- or over-protection of the child;
- (h) failure to show interest in, or provide age-appropriate opportunities for the child's cognitive and emotional development;
- (i) use of unreasonable or over-harsh disciplinary measures;
- (j) exposure to domestic violence;
- (k) 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, 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.

**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:

- (a) severe physical punishment;
- (b) beating, slapping, hitting or kicking;
- (c) pushing, shaking or throwing;
- (d) pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling;
- (e) terrorising with threats;
- (f) observing violence;
- (g) use of excessive force in handling;
- (h) deliberate poisoning;
- (i) suffocation;
- (j) 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 the following:

- (a) exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of the child;
- (b) intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;
- (c) masturbation in the presence of the child or the involvement of the child in an act of masturbation;
- (d) sexual intercourse with the child whether oral, vaginal, or anal;
- (e) sexual exploitation of a child 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, modelling 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
- (f) It may also include showing sexually explicit material to children which is often a feature of the "grooming" process by perpetrators of abuse;
- (g) 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 boys and girls. An Garda Síochána will deal with the criminal aspects of the case under the relevant legislation.

In all cases where a school becomes aware of underage sexual intercourse the school should take appropriate steps to inform the child's parents.

Cases of underage pregnancy/sexual activity Designated Liaison Person for the school should seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Services as this may be indicative of Child Abuse.

## **Children with additional vulnerabilities**

Certain children are more vulnerable to abuse than others. These include children with disabilities, children who are homeless and those who, for one reason or another, are separated from 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, sexual abuse – are applicable, but may take a slightly different form.

Where a person has concerns regarding a vulnerable adult learner, the advice of the HSE or, if necessary, An Garda Síochána should be sought.

## **Responsibilities of all School Personnel**

There is an obligation on Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh to provide learners with the highest possible standard of care in order to promote their wellbeing and protect them from harm.

In situations where school personnel suspect that a child may have been abused or neglected, or is being abused or neglected, or is at risk of abuse or neglect, they shall ensure that such concerns are reported in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy.

## **Designated Liaison Person**

The DLP of Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh is Aodán Mac Gearailt Principal. In the absence of the DLP the Deputy DLP Aoileann Nic Gearailt, Deputy Principal will always ensure that the Deputy DLP can access relevant records as required.

The name of the DLP shall be displayed in a prominent position near the main entrance to the school.

The DLP will act as a liaison with outside agencies and as a resource person to any staff member or volunteer who has child protection concerns. As a resource person, the DLP shall ensure that he/she is knowledgeable about child protection and undertakes any training considered necessary to keep him/her updated on new developments.

This person will be the designated liaison person for the school in dealing with the HSE, An Garda Síochána and other parties, in connection with allegations of and/or concerns about child abuse and neglect. Those other parties shall be advised that they shall conduct all matters pertaining to the processing or assessment/investigation of alleged child abuse through the DLP.

### **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.

### **Recognition of possible signs of abuse**

The Children First guidelines require that the HSE Children and Family Services shall always be notified where a person has a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being or is at risk of being abused or neglected.

Child protection concerns should be supported by evidence that indicates the possibility of abuse or neglect.

The guiding principles in regard to reporting child abuse or neglect may be summarised as follows:

- (a) the safety and well-being of the child must take priority:
- (b) reports should be made without delay to the Children and Family Services of the HSE.

### **Dealing with Disclosures from Children**

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 endeavor to retain his or her trust, while explaining the need for action 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.

The following format will be taken by the staff of Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh

It is important to stay calm and not to show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying. Listen compassionately and take what the child is saying seriously;

It should be understood that the child has decided to tell about something very important and has taken a risk to do so. The experience of telling should be a positive one so that the child will not mind talking to those involved;

The child should understand that it is not possible that any information will be kept a secret;

No judgmental statement should be made about the person against whom the allegation is made;

The child should not be questioned unless the nature of what he/she is saying is unclear. Leading questions should be avoided. Open, non-specific questions should be used such as "Can you explain to me what you mean by that?";

The child should be given some indication of what would happen next, such as informing the Designated Liaison Person, parents/carers, HSE or possibly An Garda Síochána. It should be kept in mind that the child may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable at this stage;

Record the disclosure immediately afterwards using, as far as possible, the child's own words.

## **Record Keeping**

When child abuse or neglect is suspected, it is essential to have a written record of all the information available. School personnel shall note carefully what they have observed and when they observed it. Signs of physical injury shall be described in detail and, if appropriate, sketched. Any comment by the child concerned, or by any other person, about how an injury occurred shall be recorded, preferably quoting words actually used, as soon as possible after the comment has been made. The record of the discussion shall be signed, dated and given to the DLP who shall retain it.

All records created shall be regarded as highly confidential and placed in a secure location by the DLP

## **Reporting of Concerns**

Action to be taken by personnel of Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh. If a member of staff receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused or neglected, or is being abused or neglected, or is at risk of abuse or neglect he/she shall, without delay, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person in that school. A written record of the report shall be made and placed in a secure location by the DLP.

Where the allegation or concern relates to the DLP, the staff member shall, without delay, report the matter to the Chairperson of the Board of Management who shall assume the role normally undertaken by the DLP and shall follow the procedures outlined above.

## **MONITORING STUDENT ATTENDANCE:**

We are obliged by the state to record student attendance on a daily basis. Returns concerning student absences, are now made several times each year to the Education Welfare Board, in accordance with the terms of the Education Welfare Act.

The system at our school is devised to make this task an effective and simple operation. Consequently, the co-operation of all staff members is requested to ensure that this significant task of school organisation is completed accurately.

**Subject teachers must know who** is in their class at all times.

### Morning Attendance:

1. Subject teachers record attendance in their teacher's journal at 9 a.m.(no later than 9.15)
2. List of absent students is sent to Principal's office
3. Absences will be recorded in official register during period 1.
4. The list of absent students will be posted on the attendance notice board in the staff room.

### Late arrivals/Early Departures:

1. Students arriving after class has commenced, or who have occasion to leave the school building during the school day, must sign the relevant register outside the main office.
2. Students must provide a written explanation when entering or leaving class. The explanation should be shown to the subject teacher and given to the Principal or Deputy Principal.

**Students are forbidden from leaving school during the school day without the advance permission of the principal or deputy principal.**

## **Action to be taken by the Designated Liaison Person**

In cases where there are concerns about a child, but the Designated Liaison Person is not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the DLP shall seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Services.

In consulting the HSE, the DLP shall be explicit that he/she is requesting advice and consultation and that he/she is not making a report.

If the HSE advises that a report should not be made, the DLP shall as soon as possible inform the Board of Management of this fact. In the interest of protecting the anonymity of the child, no details of the case should be disclosed to the Board of Management unless there are issues which need to be addressed directly by the Board of Management.

If the HSE advises that a report should be made, the DLP shall act on that advice. In all cases the DLP shall retain a record of the consultation with the HSE, which will note the date, the name of the HSE official and the advice given.

A report shall be made to the HSE either in person, by phone or in writing. In the event of an emergency, or the non-availability of HSE staff, the report shall be made to An Garda Síochána. This may be done at any Garda Station.

All reports will include as much as possible of the information sought in the Standard Reporting Form (see Appendix.) and forwarded to the HSE as soon as possible thereafter.

When such a report is being made to the HSE, the Board of Management shall be informed. Any DLP who is submitting a report to the HSE or An Garda Síochána should inform a parent/carer unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or place the child at further risk. A record shall be made of the information communicated to the parent/carer. A decision not to inform a parent/carer shall be briefly recorded together with the reasons for not doing so.

If the DLP decides that the concerns of the member of staff should not be reported to the HSE, the member of staff shall be given a clear statement, in writing, as to the reasons why action is not being taken.

Where a child transfers from or leaves a school (including transfers from primary to post-primary) and where the DLP is aware that a child protection report relating to that child has been made to the HSE in the past, the DLP should inform the HSE of the child's transfer/move.

## **Role of the H.S.E.**

Arising from the Child Care Act, 1991, the HSE has certain statutory obligations for the protection and welfare of children:

The HSE must be open to receiving information from any source about a child who may not be receiving adequate care and protection;

- (a) receiving all notifications of child abuse;
- (b) taking decisions relating to the holding of child protection conferences;
- (c) ensuring interagency co-operation on child welfare and protection;
- (d) ensuring interprofessional and interprogramme co-operation on child protection and welfare;
- (e) overseeing staff training programmes;
- (f) negotiating service agreements with voluntary service providers.

Once a report of suspected child abuse or neglect has been made to the HSE, it is then a matter for the HSE to decide upon the action, if any, which is necessitated by that report. The social worker handling the case may need to seek further clarification from the person who first raised the concerns. In some cases, the response of the HSE will be to call a child protection conference.

## **Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse relating to school employees**

It is important to note that there are two procedures to be followed:

- (a) the reporting procedure in respect of the allegation/suspicion;
- (b) the procedure for dealing with the employee.

The Designated Liaison Person is responsible for reporting the matter to the appropriate HSE area while the employer is responsible for addressing the employment issues. However, where the allegation/suspicion relates to the DLP, the employer shall assume the responsibility for seeking advice from and/or for reporting the matter to the HSE, as appropriate.

Where an allegation or suspicion of child abuse or neglect regarding a member of the Board of Management has been reported by the DLP (or employer as above) to the HSE, the Board of Management shall inform the patron that a report involving a Board member has been submitted to the HSE. It is a matter for the patron to determine if any action is necessary regarding the member's continued role on the Board.

The primary goal is to protect the children within the school. However, school employees may be subject to erroneous or malicious accusations. Any allegation of abuse or neglect shall be dealt with sensitively and support, including counselling, should be provided for staff where necessary. The Employee Assistance Service for teachers may be in a position to offer assistance to teachers. The employee shall be treated fairly which includes the right not to be judged in advance of a full and fair enquiry.

The Board of Management of Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh will always seek legal advice.

## **Reporting Procedure**

Where an allegation of abuse or neglect is made against a school employee, the DLP shall immediately act in accordance with the procedures.

Once a disclosure is made by a child, a written record of the disclosure shall be made as soon as possible by the person receiving it. If a child wishes to make a written statement this should be allowed.

Where an allegation of abuse or neglect is made by an adult, a written statement should be sought from this person. The ability of the HSE or the employer to assess suspicions or allegations of abuse or neglect will depend on the amount and quality of information conveyed to them. Whether or not the matter is being reported to the HSE, the DLP shall always inform the employer of the allegation.

School employees, other than the DLP, who receive allegations of abuse or neglect against another school employee, shall report the matter without delay to the DLP

Where the allegation or concern relates to the DLP, the school employee shall, without delay, report the matter to the Chairperson of the Board of Management

School employees who form suspicions regarding the conduct of another school employee shall consult with the DLP who may wish to consult with the HSE. If the DLP is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion, he/she shall report the matter to the HSE immediately. The DLP shall also report the matter to the employer.

The matter will always be treated in the strictest confidence and that the identity of the employee shall not be disclosed, other than as required under the procedures within this document, until such time as the employee has been offered the opportunity to address and/or be represented to the employer.

When an employer becomes aware of an allegation of abuse or neglect against a school employee, the employer shall arrange to privately inform the employee of the following:

- (a) the fact that an allegation has been made against him/her;
- (b) the nature of the allegation;
- (c) whether or not the matter has been reported to the HSE (either by the DLP or employer).

The employee shall be given a copy of the written record and/or allegation, and any other related documentation while ensuring that appropriate measures are in place to protect the child.

Once the matter has been reported to the HSE the employee shall be offered the opportunity to respond to the allegation in writing to the Board of Management within a specified period of time.

The employee shall be told that his/her explanation to the Board would also have to be passed on to the HSE.

Where the employer is unsure as to whether the nature of the allegation warrants the absence of the employee from the school while the matter is being investigated, the Board of Management shall consult with the HSE and/or An Garda Síochána for advice as to the action that those authorities would consider necessary. Following those consultations, the Board shall have due regard to the advice offered. If, in the opinion of the Board, the nature of the allegation warrants immediate action or the ratification of action taken under the protocol referred to in the policy, the Board shall direct that the employee absent himself/herself from Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh with immediate effect. The principles of natural justice and fair procedures shall be applied.

Where the Board of Management has directed an employee to absent himself/herself from the school, such an absence would not imply any degree of guilt on the part of the school employee. Where such an absence is directed, the Department of Education and Skills shall immediately be contacted with regard to:

- (a) formal approval for the payment of remuneration or ex-gratia payments in lieu of remuneration as appropriate, and
- (b) Departmental sanction for the employment of a substitute teacher where necessary.

The staff of Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh are reminded of their responsibilities to maintain strict confidentiality about all matters relating to these issues. The principles of due process and natural justice shall be adhered to by the employer at all times.

Any information or details that might identify a child should not be recorded in the minutes of Board of Management meetings.

## **Peer Abuse Bullying**

Potentially abusive behaviour between children is not ignored and, as appropriate, certain cases should be reported to the HSE.

**Normal Sexual Exploration:** This could consist of naive play between two children which involves the exploration of their sexuality. This type of behaviour may be prompted by exchanges between children such as: “you show me yours and I’ll show you mine”. One of the key aspects of this behaviour is its tone: there should not be any coercive or dominating aspects to this behaviour. Usually, there is no need for child protection intervention of any kind in this type of situation.

**Abuse Reactive Behaviour:** In this situation, one child who has been abused already acts out the same behaviour on another child. This is serious behaviour and needs to be treated as such.



In addition to responding to the needs of the abused child, the needs of the child perpetrator in this situation must also be addressed.

**Sexually Obsessive Behaviour:** In this type of situation the children may engage in sexually compulsive behaviour. These children may not have been sexually abused but they may be extremely needy and may need very specific help in addressing these needs.

**Abusive Behaviour by Adolescents and Young People:** Behaviour that is abusive will have elements of domination, coercion or bribery and certainly secrecy.

Inappropriate sexualised behaviour between children, as outlined in Chapter 9 of Children First, must be taken seriously. The principal and relevant teachers concerned should arrange separate meetings with the parents/carers of all the children involved in such behaviour with a view to resolving the situation.

In cases where school personnel have concerns about a child, but the DLP is not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the DLP shall seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Services.

The Board of Management shall make appropriate arrangements to minimise the possibility of any abusive behaviour recurring within the school through the implementation of the policies outlined at the beginning of this document.

## **Bullying**

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression – whether it be verbal, psychological or physical – that is conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating, and occurs among children mainly in social environments such as schools. It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting or extortion by one or more persons against a victim.

In accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh has in place a Code of Behaviour and an Anti-Bullying policy which includes specific methods of preventing and dealing with bullying behaviour.

All teachers are aware of the school's anti bullying policy and its guidelines for dealing with bullying. In situations where the incident is serious and where behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive the school shall consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan.

Serious instances of bullying behaviour will be reported to the HSE Children and Family Services.

## **Behaviour**

Children are to be encouraged at all times to play co-operatively and inappropriate behaviour will be addressed under our Code of Behaviour. If any incident occurs which we consider to be of sexualised nature we will notify the DLP who will record it and respond to it appropriately.

## **Visibility**

Teachers will ensure children are visible in the school yard. Children will not be allowed to spend time in classrooms, toilets or sheds where they would not be under adult supervision. They are not to leave the school yard or to engage with adults who are outside of the school yard.

## **Visitors**

Teachers on yard duty will be aware of visitors entering the school yard and will ascertain their intentions. They will be supervised in the discharge of their business. All visitors must access the school through the office first or if the secretary is not in access through the staffroom.

## **Induction of teachers and ancillary staff**

The DLP will be responsible for informing all new teachers and ancillary staff of this policy and the Children First Guideline (2011). They will also be vetted as part of the recruitment procedures.

## **Dealing with children on a one-to-one basis**

If a staff member has to work/deal/communicate with children on a one to one basis, they are requested to leave the classroom door open. A glass partition has been fitted in the doors of all resource/special needs rooms.

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 \_\_\_\_\_[date]

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson of Board of Management

Principal

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of next review: \_\_\_\_\_

## 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'?

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?