



**TEMPLE  
CARRIG  
SCHOOL**

## Procedures for dealing with suspicions of Child Abuse

*This policy should be read in the context of the Temple Carrig School Child Protection Policy.*

### 1 ALLEGATION OR SUSPICION OF ABUSE

- 1.1 If a teacher receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a pupil is being abused, the teacher should, in the first instance, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person (the Principal), Deputy Designated Liaison Person (the Deputy Principal) or in exceptional circumstances directly to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.
- 1.2 Where the matter is reported to the Principal and he/she is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation the Chairperson of the Board of Management should be advised. As a matter of course, the Principal shall also make a report on Child Protection matters to every general meeting of the Board of Management.
- 1.3 The Principal will report the matter to the local Duty Social Worker, following the procedures outlined by the HSE *Children First* guidelines. At all times the matter will be treated in the strictest confidence and not discussed except among the parties mentioned above.

It is NOT the responsibility of Temple Carrig School staff to make enquiries of parents/guardians, and in some cases it could be counter-productive for them to do so. The School does NOT investigate allegations or reports of suspected abuse, but merely refers such matters on to the Duty Social Worker who will determine what action to take, including notifying parents and/or Gardaí.

- 1.4 If, however, the Principal has concern regarding the health or welfare of a pupil who, it is alleged, is the victim of abuse, or if it is judged to be in the best interests of the child, the Principal, or a teacher designated by the Principal, may inform a parent/parents/guardian of what has been reported.

### 2 ALLEGATION OR SUSPICION OF ABUSE WITHIN SCHOOL

- 2.1 If a teacher receives an allegation or has suspicion that a child is being abused by a pupil of the school, the procedures outlined above shall apply in conjunction with the *Temple Carrig School Code of Conduct*, the *Temple Carrig School Health &*

*Safety Policy, the Temple Carrig School Anti-Bullying Policy, the Temple Carrig School Disciplinary Procedures and other Temple Carrig School policies*

- 2.2 If a teacher receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a pupil is being abused by an employee of the School, he/she should in the first instance report the matter to the Principal, who will in turn report the matter directly to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

The Principal/Chairperson shall inform the employee concerned of the suspicion or the allegation, which has been made. If it appears to the Principal/Chairperson that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion, he/she should afford the employee concerned an opportunity to respond and should report the matter to the Duty Social Work, following the procedures outlined by the HSE *Children First* guidelines. This report shall include the employee's response if the employee so desires.

The employee of the School may be suspended from work. Initially, this decision shall be at the discretion of the Principal or Deputy Principal, subject to confirmation from the Board of Management and/or the HSE and/or the Department of Education & Skills

- 2.4 If a teacher receives a further allegation, or has a suspicion that a child is continuing to be subjected to abuse after the original allegation or suspicion has been dealt with, further contacts shall be made with the HSE in accordance with the procedures outlined at 1.3 above.

### 3 ACTING IN CASES WHERE THERE IS A SUSPICION OF ABUSE

- 3.1 Should a teacher/the DLP/the DDLP or the Chairperson of the Board of Management report suspicion of child abuse, such communication is privileged. The passing on of a Report of Suspicion even if this turns out to be unfounded will be regarded as acting in Loco Parentis, in the child's best interests. Privilege can only be displaced if it can be established that the person making the complaint has acted maliciously.
- 3.2 A teacher who suspects abuse should never take on an investigative role and should not make contact with parents or guardians.
- 3.3 While every effort shall be made to protect the bond of trust, as well as the dignity of the student, where a student asks for a report to be kept confidential he/she should be informed that this may not be possible.

### 4 NOTEKEEPING WHERE THERE IS A SUSPICION OF ABUSE

- 4.1 A teacher who suspects abuse should keep meticulous notes detailing the facts, behaviours or conversations which led him or her to be concerned.

### 5 NOTEKEEPING WHERE THERE IS A DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE

- 5.1 In the case of disclosure of abuse, a teacher should immediately make limited memory notes detailing dates and times. A record should be made of what the child said, any physical damage that might have been evident, e.g. bruising, cuts, and what

action the teacher took. These notes should not contain conjecture or opinion but should be based on statements given and evidence seen.

This information has been taken from Dept. of Education & Skills Guidelines, HSE Guidelines (including *Children First*) and added to by the Board of Management.

Agreed by the Board of Management:

27<sup>th</sup> August 2013

## **HANDLING DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE**

If a child discloses to you they are paying you a compliment - they trust you.

Children do not disclose easily.

**1. Listen**

Allow them to talk.

Give them time and space.

**2. Don't promise that you will keep this a secret**

If a child is at risk you have an obligation to report it.

**3. Believe what they are saying and tell them so**

Contrary to popular opinion that children lie about sexual abuse, the vast majority of children who report an incident of abuse or molestation, are telling the truth. When children do lie about an incident of abuse, it is in the direction of under reporting, or keeping the molestation a secret, either to protect the abuser or to hide their own feelings of shame or guilt.

**4. Tell them you are glad they told you**

Praise them and tell them they did the right thing.

You can't do this too many times. This is very important to counter balance the messages the child has been receiving from the abuser.

**5. Deal with their feelings**

When a child reports an incident of abuse it is often difficult not to respond with a strong emotion. However, when a child needs help to sort some very confusing feelings of their own the adult needs to put aside emotions or disbelief. Your reaction is a critical signal to the child. A child may withdraw and not continue the report if he or she senses anger or other strong emotions in the adult. Don't criticise the abuser, as the child may have a strong emotional connection with the abuser.

**6. Stay in control**

Keep in control of your emotions - stay calm. This approach helps to reassure the child that you are strong enough to handle the information that they are telling you. Let the child know that you will be supportive.

**7. Emphasize they are not at fault**

There are a variety of ways that an adult can help a child to understand that an incident of abuse was not their fault. As it is common for a child to blame themselves when they are molested, this is an important goal to achieve. Explain how the adult in question broke the rules, and how this was unfair because they were bigger, more powerful, smarter etc.

**8. Talking about abuse**

Allow the child to tell you what happened without prompting too much. Let them know that you are not afraid to know what happened. Make notes of dates, as soon as possible after the child has told you. Give reassurances that it is okay to talk and that you are there for them.

**9. Implement the *Temple Carrig School Procedures for Dealing with Suspicions/Revelations of Child Abuse.***

Dealing with child abuse issues can be emotionally draining and every case is different. However, it is crucially important that appropriate procedures are strictly followed – to protect the child, and to protect the teacher to whom they have confided.

## **POSSIBLE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF ABUSE**

### **Behavioural indices**

All of these indicators can occur in other disorders where abuse has not been a factor.

1. Overly compliant behaviour
2. Acting out, aggressive behaviour
3. Reluctance to be at home - seen in early arrival at school and/or leaving late with few, if any, absences
4. Poor peer relationships or inability to make friends
5. Lack of trust, particularly with significant others
6. Non - participation in school and social activities
7. Inability to concentrate in school
8. Sudden drop in school performance
9. Running away from home
10. Sleep disturbances
11. Regressive behaviour
12. Withdrawal behaviour.
13. Suicidal feelings and self - destructive behaviour
14. Depression
15. "Froze gaze" i.e. wide - eyed immobilised expression of a child who learned not to cry because he will be subject to physical abuse
16. Sudden onset of eating problems, particularly related to the start of puberty

### **Sexual abuse indices**

Although these symptoms are not necessarily indicative of child sexual abuse, if children exhibit extreme or combined symptoms from the list the possibility of sexual abuse should be considered and investigated.

1. Hints about sexual activity
2. Sudden change towards uncharacteristic sexual play with peers or toys or with themselves, or sexually aggressive behaviour with others
3. Detailed or age-inappropriate understanding of sexual behaviour (especially by young children)
4. Excessive fear of adults or displaying apprehension or withdrawn behaviour, or conversely very aggressive behaviour
5. Excessive attachment to adults
6. Inappropriate seductive behaviour
7. Excessive fears of settling down at bedtime and/or being left alone
8. Unusual reluctance to join in normal activities involving the removal of clothing eg swimming