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## **GARDA VETTING POLICY**

***ETSS WICKLOW, CRINION PARK, WICKLOW TOWN***

***SCHOOL PATRON: EDUCATE TOGETHER***

ETSS Wicklow will endeavour to follow careful procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff and all volunteers and non-teaching staff who may have unsupervised contact with children in a school context.

### **Rationale:**

It is the intention that all members of the school community who have unsupervised access to children have undergone the Garda Vetting process and will be re-vetted on a regular basis. All efforts will be made to ensure that staff do not commence work in the school without Garda Vetting. The school will ensure that any person who has not yet been vetted does not have **unsupervised** access to children until Garda Vetting has been completed. This policy has been framed in compliance with:

- DES circular letter 31/2016
- The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017
- The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 as amended by the Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016
- The Data Protection Acts/GDPR
- Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004
- Equal Status Act 2000
- Industrial Relations Act 1990

## Goals:

- To ensure that the school is a safe and secure environment
- To ensure that vetting of school personnel is carried out to the highest standards of good practice, in compliance with all legal and ethical obligations and in an open, transparent and just manner.
- To ensure that all applicants for vetting are assured that the highest standards of confidentiality are observed.

## Procedure:

- The principal will be designated as the contact person responsible for the implementation of this policy and for liaising with the liaison person in JMB.
- The principal will conduct the process on behalf of the school in conjunction with the Teaching Council, the Joint Managerial Body (JMB) and with the Vetting Bureau.
- The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012, Section 12, requires a school authority to obtain a vetting disclosure from the Vetting Bureau prior to employment of, contracting of, permitting or placement of a person to undertake relevant work or activities with children or vulnerable persons. This applies to all appointments of any duration including full-time, part-time and substitute positions. It is a criminal offence for a school authority to commence the employment of an employee to do relevant work or activities without first obtaining a vetting disclosure from the Bureau in respect of that person.

## Vetting Procedures for Teaching Staff:

- All teachers appointed to teaching positions for any duration must be vetted prior to commencing employment.
- When applying for a teaching position with ETSS Wicklow, all teachers are asked to present a Teaching Council Vetting Letter with their application.
- All teaching staff must present a **Teaching Council Vetting Letter** prior to commencing employment.
- All teaching staff must present a **Statutory Declaration** before commencing employment.
- All teaching staff must present a **Form of Undertaking** with ETSS Wicklow prior to commencing employment.
- All substitute staff must present a **Teaching Council Vetting Letter** and **Statutory Declaration**. They must also sign a **Form of Undertaking** with ETSS Wicklow.
- Any teacher who refuses to be vetted cannot be appointed or engaged by ETSS Wicklow in any capacity including in a voluntary role.

Following the completion of retrospective vetting in April 2018, all personnel doing relevant work or activities in schools must have been vetted.

In cases where no statutory vetting obligation exists (see sections 5.3 and 6.4 of **DES Circular 0031/2016**) a school authority must consider, having regard to its duty of care to its pupils, whether it should seek an up to date vetting disclosure in respect of the person (as per Section 9 of **DES Circular 0031/2016**)

**Exemptions** - a school is not required to obtain a vetting disclosure from the Bureau:

- In the case of the employment of, or entering into a contract for services with, a person on behalf of the State Examinations Commission (SEC) – locally appointed superintendents of special centres, aural examinations, and practical examinations etc. (*Nonetheless, JMB advises that such recruitment is carried out in a prudent manner and that, where possible, all such personnel are vetted. If vetting is not feasible such persons should provide a Statutory Declaration and Form of Undertaking*).
- For unpaid volunteers who assist on an occasional basis '**as long as the (person) is not involved in the coaching, mentoring, counselling, teaching or training of pupils.**' (DES FAQs for schools – Q.12, page 11, [https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0031\\_2016\\_faq.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0031_2016_faq.pdf))

**Vetting Procedures for Non-Teaching Staff:**

- Identification check (two forms of identification)
- Submit completed vetting form
- Form sent to the Joint Managerial Body (JMB) for checking with the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU);
- JMB contact the candidate via email to complete checking process;
- JMB forward a vetting clearance certificate to the school via a special email account the school operates for dealing with vetting applications;
- Candidate informed that check has been completed;

**Garda Vetting Procedures for all categories:**

- Prospective employees must be informed in writing that their appointment is subject to the satisfactory outcome of vetting.
- At the completion of the selection process, when the preferred candidate has been selected, the candidate must, if he or she is a qualified teacher, apply to the Teaching Council to be vetted. If the candidate has already been vetted by the Vetting Bureau, he or she must enable the principal to access the vetting disclosure online so that it can be downloaded and assessed.
- All others must complete a Vetting Bureau Application Form and submit it to JMB through the school.
- Failure to complete the Vetting Application Form will disqualify the candidate and no offer of employment can be made to him or her.
- The provision of inaccurate information on the Vetting Application Form may disqualify.
- Failure to disclose a conviction will disqualify, other than as provided for in section 14A of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012, as amended.
- A **Statutory Declaration** and a **Form of Undertaking** must be signed by all those appointed to teaching and non-teaching posts of any duration.
- Where a person changes employment from one school to another, the Statutory Declaration is valid if made in the same or previous calendar year.
- A statement confirming that he/she has read and understood the school's Child Protection Policy must be signed by the candidate.

### **Teaching Personnel:**

- Persons being appointed must be vetted prior to appointment to any teaching position, regardless of the duration of the appointment.
- Where the teacher to be appointed is a registered teacher or has applied to be registered, vetting is carried out through the Teaching Council. The teacher must enable the school authority to access the vetting disclosure on the *Teaching Council's Digital platform*.
- The school will download the vetting disclosure in respect of the teacher
- The school will retain a copy for its records

**IT DOES NOT FOLLOW THAT VETTING DEEMED SATISFACTORY FOR TEACHING COUNCIL PURPOSES WILL, IN ALL CASES, BE SATISFACTORY FOR EMPLOYMENT PURPOSES. IT IS THE BOARD'S VETTING POLICY ONLY THAT WILL DETERMINE THIS.**

The Teaching Council's determination as to whether a particular vetting outcome is satisfactory for its purposes is made within the statutory framework within which the Teaching Council works. It is possible that an outcome which meets the Teaching Council's requirements might not be acceptable to the school's board of management for employment purposes.

### **Non-Teaching Personnel**

- Vetting for all non-teaching personnel is carried out through JMB as outlined previously.

### **Other Appointees (volunteers, coaches, etc)**

- The principal will meet with and interview all volunteers, coaches, trainers, etc. who may be involved in relevant work or activities in the school from time to time.
- The board will have persons in this category vetted through JMB prior to their engagement by the school. However, it is permissible for two or more organisations to agree in writing that one organisation will have the person vetted, e.g. the school could agree with the GAA that the GAA will have the person vetted. In such a case, the school must receive written confirmation from the other organisation that the person has been vetted and the school should require a copy of the vetting disclosure from the person who has been vetted by the organisation with which the school has entered into a written agreement.

### **Student Teachers**

- Student teachers must be vetted through JMB unless there is a prior written agreement between the school and the college. The school must receive written confirmation from the college that the student teacher has been vetted. The school should also require that the student teacher furnishes to the school their disclosure from the Vetting Bureau to enable the school to determine if the disclosure amounts to satisfactory vetting in terms of the school's vetting policy.

## **Students and Work Experience**

- Where a student is participating in work experience programme which requires that the student be vetted, a completed Vetting Application Form (NVB 1), downloadable from [jmb.ie](http://jmb.ie), should be submitted to JMB.
- Persons not yet 16 years old cannot be vetted.
- Where the student is 16 or 17 years old on the date on which the vetting application form is signed and dated, the application must be accompanied by the Parent/Guardian Consent Form (NVB 3) available on the JMB website.
- Vetting may be conducted in respect of students over 18 years of age on his/her written authorisation where required for an individual participating in work experience.

## **The School's Duty of Care to Students going on Work Experience**

- Students going on work experience should be well prepared by the school to cope with potentially difficult situations. They should be assured of school support in such instances.
- Safety of students should be discussed with employers before placements begin.

## **Garda Vetting Procedure – Disclosure (Record found by GCVU)**

If the Garda Vetting Form is returned with a disclosure, the Chairperson must bring the matter to the Board of Management. In deciding whether a conviction renders a candidate unsuitable for volunteering, the school should have regard to:

- The nature of the offence and its possible relevance to the work the volunteer will undertake;
- The age of the offence (offences many years in the past may be less relevant than more recent offences) and the age of the candidate at the time of the offence;
- The frequency of the offence (a series of offences will give more cause for concern than an isolated minor conviction);
- Offences which are not sexual or violent in nature or drug related offences of a minor nature committed before the age of 18 will be judged in the light of the age of the applicant at the time of the offence;
- Where the vetting process discloses pending prosecutions or unsuccessful prosecutions, such prosecutions will be assessed in the light of the nature, age and frequency of the alleged offence(s) and of the age of the candidate at the time of the alleged offences;
- Statutory vetting will, in addition to a check for criminal records, include a check for any relevant 'soft information'. 'Soft information' referred to as 'specified information' in the Vetting Act, is information other than criminal convictions held by *An Garda Síochána* that leads to a bona-fide belief that a person poses a threat to children or vulnerable persons.

It should be noted that the Act states that 'Where a member of staff of the Bureau considers there is specified information relating to a person who is the subject of an application for vetting disclosure, he or she shall refer the matter to the Chief Bureau Officer for assessment and determination under *section 15* as to whether the information concerned should be disclosed.

The Chief Bureau Officer shall assess the application for vetting disclosure and the specified information relating to the person who is the subject of that application but he or she shall not decide that the information concerned should be disclosed unless:

**(a)** He or she reasonably believes that that information is of such a nature as to give rise to a *bona fide* concern that the person concerned may:

- Harm any child or vulnerable person,
- Cause any child or vulnerable person to be harmed,
- Put any child or vulnerable person at risk of harm,
- Attempt to harm any child or vulnerable person, or
- Incite another person to harm any child or vulnerable person,

**(b)** He or she is satisfied that its disclosure is necessary, proportionate and reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of children or vulnerable persons or both, as the case may be. Because of the nature of 'specified information' and the requirements in the Act, an appeal process is available to the vetting applicant before 'specified information' can be disclosed;

**(c)** The board of management will determine whether a vetting applicant whose disclosure from the Bureau includes 'specified information' is a suitable person to be employed in the school. In such a case the vetting applicant will be afforded an opportunity to make representations to the board of management before the board comes to a decision on the matter.

- The principal will meet the applicant in person and in privacy. The applicant will be informed of the nature of the disclosure and will be given an opportunity to respond to it.
- The principal is authorised by the board to determine if the outcome of the vetting of a candidate has been satisfactory or not, the determination being made in accordance with this policy. Should the principal deem it necessary, he/she may consult the chairperson of the board of management before reaching a decision.
- The only circumstance in which a disclosure of convictions or prosecutions would be made known to the board of management would be where the applicant consents that they be consulted.
- A copy of the vetting disclosure document will be given to the applicant.

#### **Garda Vetting Procedure – No Disclosure (No record found by GCVU)**

- The candidate is offered the position
- The GV form is placed in a signed and sealed envelope in the candidates Personnel File that must be kept in a secure, confidential location in the school.

## **The Eight Rules of Data Protection**

This will be strictly observed by the school.

The rules are:

- Gather and process information fairly
- Keep it only for one or more specified, explicit and lawful purposes
- Use and disclose it only in ways compatible with these purposes
- Keep data safe and secure
- Keep data accurate and up-to-date
- Ensure that it is adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Retain it no longer than is necessary for the purpose or purposes
- Give a copy to the individual, on request

### **Implementation:**

This policy will be effective from the date of adoption by the board of management. The school's Vetting Policy will be made available to candidates for employment, paid or unpaid. It will be included on the school's **Job Application Form(s)**, such that the candidate's signature on that form confirms that he/she is aware of the school's policy on vetting and accepts the school's policy that satisfactory vetting is an essential requirement for appointment to a post in the school. By signing the Vetting Application Form, the job applicant authorises the principal to receive disclosure of the outcome of vetting and to have regard to it in determining if the candidate may be appointed to the post.

### **Policy Review:**

This policy will be reviewed every two years and particularly to comply with any relevant legislative changes.