Child Protection Policy of ETSS Wicklow

School Address: The Glebe, Wicklow Town

Roll number: 68345R

School Patron/s: Educate Together

The ETSS Wicklow Board of Management 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. In accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills' Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, ETSS Wicklow operates the following child protection policy:

1. ETSS Wicklow Board of Management has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools as part of this overall child protection policy.
2. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is **The Principal**
3. The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is **The Deputy-Principal**
4. In its policies, practices and activities, ETSS Wicklow 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 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 and encourage parental involvement in the education of their children;
- fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.
- The school will also adhere to the above principles in relation to any adult pupil with a special vulnerability.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- The Children First Act 2015
- The Child Care Act 1991
- Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998
- Criminal Justice Act 2006 – Reckless Endangerment
- Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017
- Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012
- National Vetting Persons (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012-2016

DEFINITION AND RECOGNITION OF CHILD ABUSE

- **Emotional abuse:** The systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child. Once off and occasional difficulties between parent/carer and child are not considered emotional abuse.
- **Physical abuse:** Is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents.
- **Sexual abuse:** When a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or arousal, or for that of others. It includes the child being involved in sexual acts or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography
- **Neglect:** When a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally.
- **Bullying:** repeated aggression, whether it is verbal, psychological or physical that is conducted by an individual or group against others.

STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS

- to keep children safe from harm and to prepare and display a Child Safeguarding Statement
- to report child protection concerns at or above a defined threshold to Tusla.
- to assist Tusla in the assessment of a child protection risk.

GARDA VETTING

Circular 0031/2016

From 29 April 2016, ***the Vetting Act*** will be commenced and will place statutory vetting obligations on school authorities.

As and from 29 April 2016, the Vetting Act requires that a school authority must not, other than where certain exemptions (which are set out at Section 6.4 of the circular) apply, contract, permit or place a person to undertake relevant work or activities prior to the school authority receiving a vetting disclosure from the Bureau in respect of that person.

CHILD PROTECTION OVERSIGHT REPORT (CPOR)

At every Board of management meeting, the principal will provide a CPOR under the following headings:

(1) Allegations of abuse made against members of school personnel
(2) Other child protection concerns in respect of pupils in the school
(3) Child protection concerns arising from alleged bullying behaviour amongst pupils
(4) Summary data in respect of reporting

- Records must be treated in the strictest confidence by all board members.
- Under no circumstances shall the board members enter into any discussion or investigation in relation to the substance or credibility of the allegation when undertaking this oversight role.
- They are to be reviewed solely for the purposes of oversight of the reporting requirements set out in these procedures.
- Board members must not disclose or discuss matters discussed at board meetings unless explicitly authorised by the board to do so.
- A board member who breaches this requirement may be removed from the board by the patron.
- The documents shall be provided to the board members at the board meeting and recovered after the matter has been dealt with.
- The documents shall not be separately circulated to or retained by any members of the board.

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 Guidelines (2011).

VISITORS TO THE SCHOOL

The Principal must be notified in advance of any arranged visits in order to make arrangements to comply with Circular 0031/2016 Garda Vetting where necessary. Secretarial staff will be made aware of visitors entering the school and will ascertain their intentions. Visitors will be required to sign in and out in a visitor's book and wear a visitor's badge. They will be supervised in the discharge of their business.

DEALING WITH STUDENTS ON A ONE-TO-ONE BASIS

Staff at ETSS Wicklow are aware of and follow the Code of Practice for Staff in their dealings with students e.g. professional distance, referral, and physical contact. (ETSS Wicklow Staff Handbook)

If a staff member/visiting professional such as Speech and Language therapist/ occupational therapist has to work/deal/communicate with students on a one-to-one basis, the door, if closed, must have a vision panel and the parents must have been informed that the child will be receiving one-to-one support.

The one-to one policy will work as follows:

- Provided it is deemed appropriate for an individual, one-to-one teaching will be provided.
- When one to one teaching/counselling takes place, the classroom door will generally be closed to provide for a quiet/private learning environment. Any closed doors in one-to-one situations must have ***vision panels*** in line with child protection guidelines.
- If a child needs one to one teaching/counselling, parents/guardians should be informed as part of the school support process
- Substitute teachers are Garda vetted and therefore will continue with one to one teaching programmes as timetabled.
- Students on teaching practice or on work experience should never be on one to one settings with pupils in the school.
- When a child and SNA/teacher are in a one to one setting at break times, the door will remain open.

SUPERVISION

School supervision and routines will be followed by all staff to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of students at a break time.

VISIBILITY

Teachers will ensure that students are visible and supervised at all times. Students will not be allowed to spend time in classrooms unsupervised. Students will not be put out of class.

STUDENTS TRAVELLING IN STAFF CARS

Staff members will not carry students alone in their cars. Public or private transport will be arranged to travel to and from curricular and extra-curricular events. If a child is ill, parents/ guardians will be contacted to come and collect their son/daughter.

STUDENT BEHAVIOUR

Students are encouraged to behave appropriately in class and during extra-curricular activities and inappropriate behaviour will be addressed under our Code of Behaviour.

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Bullying behaviour is not tolerated at ETSS Wicklow. Students are reminded of this at the beginning of each academic school year when Class Tutors explain to them exactly what bullying behaviour is. ETSS Wicklow is a **"TELLING"** school. This means that *anyone* who knows about bullying or unkind behaviour is *expected* to tell a staff member. The supports and consequences for victims and bullies are outlined in the ***Anti-Bullying Policy***.

The school uses Restorative Justice practices when possible. Lessons on this issue are dealt with in Social Personal & Health Education (SPHE), Ethical Education, Friendship Week and related subject areas.

ATTENDANCE

With regards to Child Protection we will pay particular attention to trends in regards to attendance.

TRIPS AND OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Students, Staff and Parents must familiarise themselves with the school tours policy prior to signing up for a school trip. During school trips, teachers/school staff will act in a responsible manner having regard to the fact that they are in the company of and responsible for the care of teenagers and young adults. Teachers will maintain the same standards of care as apply in school. It is important that the rules agreed by teachers and parents and signed by students are enforced by all teachers while away with students, especially with regard to the consumption of alcohol (and/or other prescribed substances) by students.

SPHE & RELATIONSHIPS SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE)

Safeguarding Roles & Student Awareness

All students from 1st Year through 6th Year will be taught to identify:

- The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLP).
- What a Mandated Person is under the Children First Act, including their statutory duties to report child welfare concerns.

Limits of Confidentiality

While SPHE classrooms foster an atmosphere of trust and open discussion, staff cannot promise absolute confidentiality. Teachers must break confidentiality and follow child protection procedures when disclosures relate to:

- Child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, or neglect)
- Intentional self-harm or harm to others
- Substance misuse
- Severe bullying or cyberbullying
- Disclosures of illegal activity or serious welfare breaches

All disclosures of this nature are referred immediately to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) or Deputy DLP in accordance with Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools. Teachers will remind students of these boundaries at the beginning of the school year and before sensitive topics are explored.

DVDS & MEDIA

Staff will always ensure that any Video, Podcast, Media Clip shown to the students is age appropriate. ETSS Wicklow is a post primary school and as such videos or educational material and media used will be age appropriate to each class group.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse and neglect should be shared only on a ***'need to know'*** basis in the interests of the child. The test is whether or not the person has any legitimate involvement or role in dealing with the issue.

However, giving information to those who need to have that information, for the protection of a child who may have been abused or neglected, or is being abused and neglected, or is at risk of abuse or neglect is not a breach of confidentiality.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 13 October 2026
To be reviewed: annually

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school and provided to the Parent-Staff Association (PSA). A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.