



Information Letter for Parents

Child Protection & Safeguarding at Holywell ETNS

Dear Parents/Guardians,

At Holywell Educate Together National School (HETNS), the safety and well-being of every child is our primary concern. Our school operates under a comprehensive *Child Protection Policy*, which is in full compliance with the *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017, Children First Guidelines (revised 2023)*, relevant legislation, and Department of Education and Skills circulars. All staff members of the school are vetted through the school's patron, Educate Together. Teachers are vetted through the Teaching Council. Staff members also complete training on child protection and safeguarding.

The Board of Management completes an annual review of the safeguarding measures of children in our school, through a comprehensive risk assessment of actions carried out in school to ensure child's welfare and safety at school.

Additionally, through the *Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE)* program, we provide students with essential life skills and knowledge, including *Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)*. This integration ensures that students are equipped to understand healthy relationships, boundaries, and how to protect their well-being.

What do you do if you have a concern about a child?

If there are concerns about your child's safety, here is the process of a child protection referral at Holywell ETNS:

1. Identifying a Concern

A concern can be raised through:

- Observations of physical, emotional, or behavioural indicators by staff.
- A disclosure made by the child.
- Reports shared by another parent, student, or community member.

2. Reporting the Concern

Staff members are legally required to report any concerns to the school's *Designated Liaison Person (DLP)*. At Holywell ETNS, Maria Boyne serves as the DLP. If the DLP is unavailable, the *Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL P)* will take responsibility. In our school, Cathal Manning is the DDL P.

3. DLP Assessment

The DLP assesses the concern following the *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*. The DLP may contact Tusla first for advice, or in an extreme case, they may call An Garda Síochána for urgent action. If the concern meets the referral threshold, the DLP submits a formal report to the Child and Family Agency (Tusla). Parents are generally informed unless doing so could increase the risk to the child.

4. Referral to Tusla

If a referral is necessary, the DLP reports the concern to Tusla, which will investigate and determine the next steps. The school supports Tusla by providing any required information while continuing to support the child.

5. Ongoing Child Support

During the referral process, Holywell ETNS ensures that the child receives continued care and support. We strive to maintain a safe and secure environment, minimizing disruption for the child involved.

6. Holywell ETNS Child Protection Policy

Our *Child Protection Policy* ensures that we address any child protection concerns promptly and effectively. The policy follows the *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017*, *Children First Guidelines*, and all relevant legislation. The policy reflects our commitment to the safety and welfare of our students.

7. Children First Act 2015 Compliance

The *Children First Act 2015* identifies school personnel as "Mandated Persons" responsible for reporting child protection concerns. Holywell ETNS fully complies with these legal requirements, ensuring that all child protection concerns are handled appropriately and promptly.

8. RSE and SPHE

At Holywell ETNS, *RSE* (Relationships and Sexuality Education) is taught through the *SPHE* (Social, Personal, and Health Education) program. RSE educates children about respectful relationships, boundaries, and safety, empowering them to make informed choices. The integration of RSE within SPHE ensures that students are well-prepared to recognize and respond to any situations that may affect their well-being.

9. Confidentiality

All child protection matters are treated with the highest level of confidentiality. Information is shared only with those who need to know in order to ensure the safety and protection of the child involved.

10. Parental Involvement

In most cases, parents will be informed and involved in the child protection process. However, in situations where informing parents may increase the risk to the child, the school will act in the child's best interest in accordance with legal guidelines.

If you have any questions or require more information about our child protection policies, the *Children First Act*, or the role of *RSE* and *SPHE* in fostering your child's safety and well-being, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.