



Educate
Together

Child Safeguarding Statement

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Introduction

Educate Together is a patron body for national and second level schools which are run according to the Educate Together Charter. We are an independent NGO that runs schools that guarantee equality of access and esteem to children 'irrespective of their social, cultural or religious background'. Educate Together has paramount concern for the welfare of children and the protection of their rights. This concern stems from the legal commitment to child-centred education contained in the Educate Together Charter, the organisation's obligations under law and a profound moral and ethical commitment.

Following the enactment of the Children First Act 2015, Educate Together acknowledges and supports the standards detailed in the revised "Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children" published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in 2017 available on the department website.

The aim and purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to Educate Together National Office Staff in identifying and responding to allegations and suspicions of child abuse or neglect and ultimately safeguarding children, families and staff members in the process.

This safeguarding statement is displayed on the Educate Together website and in the national Office and applies to;

- all staff of the National Office
- interns
- volunteers
- Board members and
- agents of the Educate Together National Office

For the purposes of this document these shall be referred to as "Educate Together staff member".

All the above have a responsibility to protect children and therefore have a duty to report child abuse as set out in the Children First Act 2015 and Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children – Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2017.

Educate Together have appointed and trained a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Deputy DLP.

DLP Fionnuala Ward fionnuala.ward@educatetogether.ie

Deputy DLP Adrienne Flynn adrienne.flynn@educatetogether.ie

This Child Safeguarding Statement is set out with our obligations as Patron of Schools and our obligations as an organisation which provides services for children through our schools.

- Educate Together as Patron of schools
- National Office and region-based operations

Educate Together as Patron

Educate Together has a number of different roles. It is:

- a Patron of schools
- a representative organisation for patron bodies who have signed up to the Educate Together Charter and are members of the Company and
- a recognised School Management Organisation, for
 - Boards of Management of schools which operate under the patronage of Educate Together
 - Boards of Management of Schools whose patron bodies have signed up to the Educate Together Charter and who are a member of the Company and
 - Boards of Management who have signed up to the Educate Together Charter and who are members of the Company.

For the purposes of this document a Board of Management of a school which has Educate Together as its patron shall be referred to as “an Educate Together Board of Management”.

Patrons of schools are responsible for the establishment and oversight of schools under their patronage in accordance with the Education Act 1998 (as amended). They also have a specific oversight role under the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 (the 2017 Child Protection Procedures).

Compliance by schools

Boards of Management have specific roles and responsibilities under the 2017 Child Protection Procedures and other related legal obligations.

Statutory Obligations

The main statutory obligations on a board of management under the Children First Act, 2015 are to:

- ensure, as far as practicable that children are safe from harm while availing of the school’s services (i.e. while attending the school or while participating in school activities)
- carry out an assessment of any potential for harm to children while they are attending the school or while they are participating in school activities (this is known as a risk assessment)
- prepare and display a written Child Safeguarding Statement in accordance with the requirements of the Act
- appoint a “relevant person” (DLP), as the first point of contact in respect of the school’s Child Safeguarding Statement
- provide a copy of its Child Safeguarding Statement to members of school personnel and, where requested to parents, members of the public and to Tusla.

In the case of a newly established school this requirement must be met within three months from the date on which the school opens to receive pupils.

Educate Together requires formal assurances from each Educate Together Board of Management that it has implemented the 2017 Child Protection Procedures issued by the Department of Education and Skills (“the DES”) including but not limited to:

- it has formally adopted a Child Safeguarding Statement prepared in accordance with section 11 of the Children First Act, 2015 and the ‘Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary schools 2017’
- a written assessment of risk as required under the Children First Act 2015
- that the Designated Liaison Person (“DLP”) and a deputy DLP are appointed and have attended child protection training
- if members of the Board have attended child protection training
- that the Child Safeguarding Statement is communicated to all existing and new staff and that all staff have been instructed and trained regarding their responsibilities under the Procedures
- that the Parents’ Association (if any) and parents on request, have been provided with the statement
- that the Principal has provided a Child Protection Oversight Report at each Board meeting
- that it is fully implementing the SPHE curriculum and the Stay Safe programme (applies to primary schools) or the Wellbeing programme for Junior Cycle students (applies to post-primary schools)
- that all staff and volunteer appointments have been carried out in accordance with good recruitment practices including compliance with vetting requirements and taking up of references etc
- any training needs have been assessed and addressed
- has considered any complaints or suggestions for improvements
- has sought feedback from parents and pupils as part of the child safeguarding requirements
- and that they are satisfied that the ‘Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017’ are being fully and adequately implemented by the school.

Confirming compliance by Educate Together Boards of Management

Policy CP001 - Annual reporting of Child Safeguarding Statement		
Applies to	Affects	Authority
Patronage sub-committee of Board of Directors, CEO	Educate Together Board of Management	CEO
Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/ Last Review:	March 2018	

Assurances are sought from each Educate Together Board of Management that the Annual Review for the Child Safeguarding Statement is complete, and a copy of the checklist submitted to the National Office before the 1 December each year.

The National Office will maintain a register of such assurances.

The governance and patronage programme manager will present a report in January of each year to the Patronage sub-committee of the Board of Directors and the CEO listing the Educate Together Boards of Management who have complied with this requirement.

In the event of an Educate Together Board of Management, which has Educate Together as its patron, failing to provide such evidence of compliance, the Patronage sub-committee will write formally to the Board of Management of the school concerned seeking compliance within a specified period. If they fail to comply within that period, the sub-committee will consider the appropriate action, which could include advising the Patron that Sections 16 and/or Section 19 of the Education Act should be invoked.

If either, a patron body that is a member of the Company and who has signed up to the Educate Together Charter and/or an Educate Together Board of Management which does not have Educate Together as its Patron, have not ensured that they and/or their school(s) are compliant with the DES 2017 Child Protection Procedures, they are not operating in a manner that is compatible with Educate Together's Charter or membership of the Company and the Board of Directors will take appropriate action to deal with this.

National Office and region-based operations

The Educate Together national office does not directly provide services to/for children, nor is it in regular direct contact with children and ordinarily children are not present in the National Office. Staff in Educate Together work predominantly from the National Office and some regional based operations. The Child Safeguarding Statement applies when working in the national office and while representing Educate Together at other venues, such as visits to schools, children coming to our conferences or AGM, supporting schools at events such as the Young Scientist Exhibition for example, etc.

For the purposes of this policy the term 'child' will include any person up to the age of 18 years.

Risk assessment

Educate Together has carried out a risk assessment of any potential for harm to a child while availing of our services.

Educate Together does not usually work directly with children in its day to day activities, but does engage with children from time to time. Educate Together is a recognised patron of schools who work directly with children.

The Child Safeguarding Statement identifies areas of risk and a list of procedures for managing these risks.

Risk Identified	Procedure number
Disclosure of a child protection concern to the national office	CP002
Children and young people under the age of 18 participating in events and attending the National Office	CP003
Management of images of children in Educate Together media	CP004

Definition of harm as outlined on Tusla's Website:

The threshold of harm for each category of abuse at which mandated persons have a legal obligation to report concerns is outlined below.

"Harm" means, in relation to a child:

- a) assault, ill-treatment or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects or is likely to seriously affect the child's health, development or welfare, or
- b) sexual abuse of the child

Neglect:

Neglect is defined as 'to deprive a child of adequate food, warmth, clothing, hygiene, supervision, safety or medical care'. The threshold of harm, at which you must report to Tusla under the Children First Act 2015, is reached when you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child's needs have been neglected, are being neglected, or are at risk of being neglected to the point where the child's health, development or welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.

Emotional abuse/ill-treatment:

Ill-treatment is defined as 'to abandon or cruelly treat the child, or to cause or procure or allow the child to be abandoned or cruelly treated'. Emotional abuse is covered in the definition of ill-treatment used in the Children First Act 2015. The threshold of harm, at which you must report to Tusla under the Children First Act 2015, is reached when you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being ill-treated to the point where the child's health, development or welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.

Physical abuse:

Physical abuse is covered in the references to assault in the Children First Act 2015. The threshold of harm, at which you must report to Tusla under the Children First Act 2015, is reached when you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being assaulted and that as a result the child's health, development or welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.

Sexual abuse:

If, as a mandated person, you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being sexually abused, then you must report this to Tusla under the Children First Act 2015.

<http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/mandated-persons/what-is-the-threshold-for-making-a-mandated-report>

Disclosure of a child protection concern to the National office

A child protection concern could be brought to the attention of an Educate Together staff member. While we have no role in investigating individual child protection concerns we must ensure that any relevant information received is sent to the appropriate authorities in accordance with relevant legislation and guidelines, see appendices.

The following procedures, which would also apply to reporting allegations of abuse made against an Educate Together staff member, volunteer, intern or Director (Educate Together staff member), should be adopted in these situations.

<i>Policy CP002- Child protection concerns brought to the attention of the national office</i>		
Applies to	Affects	Authority
Educate Together National Office staff, DLP, Board of Directors	Board of Management of Schools operating with Educate Together's patronage, National Office employees Board of Directors	Board of Directors
Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/ Last Review:	March 2018	

Initial contact:

Someone in the first instance could seek general advice on a child protection matter, for example a Principal looking for advice or a parent who may be dissatisfied with how a school is dealing with an issue (without naming the school and/or individuals within the school).

At this point it will be communicated to the individual that Educate Together has no role in investigating child protection concerns and statutory responsibility for child protection rests with the HSE Children and Family Services.

More information can be found on - <https://www.education.ie/en/Parents/Information/Child-Protection/>

If a disclosure or an allegation of a child protection concern is raised the following steps will be taken;

- If it is raised in person or by phone, the staff member with whom initial contact is made will listen to the complaint
 - make written notes with as much information as possible
 - inform the individual on the phone that this information will be passed on to the DLP, thereby clarifying that there is no guarantee of confidentiality to the person raising the concern (including child welfare complaints against Educate Together staff members)
- If the concern is in writing (by email or post) it will be passed onto the DLP

Role of the DLP

- The DLP will assess the concern, referring to the definitions of harm, (see page 6) to see if it meets the threshold and may contact the HSE (without giving specific details of the complaint) for advice
- If no other action is necessary at this stage, no formal report will be made
- Even though a formal report is not being made to the HSE, the DLP shall always inform the employer (e.g. the Principal or Chairperson of a school or the CEO/Chairperson of Board of Directors of Educate Together) that an allegation of abuse has been made or a complaint has been made as to how an alleged Child Protection issue has been dealt with in a school
- If following advice from the HSE and without giving specific details of the complaint, the DLP determines it is appropriate to make a formal report, they may contact the person who raised the concern, (if contact details were given) for additional information
- A report will be made using the Standard Report Form and submitted to the appropriate HSE - <https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/resources/hrppg/children-first-standard-report-form.pdf>

If an allegation is made about a National Office Staff member, and subsequently upheld following an investigation, standard disciplinary procedures will be followed as per the National Office HR Policy.

If an allegation is made about a Staff member, and subsequently not upheld by an investigation, and / or if an unfounded allegation is found to have been made with malicious intent, then disciplinary action may be taken (for members of Staff and/or Board of Directors). For external parties Educate Together may choose to prosecute under the Defamation Act, 2009.

Outside of office hours

If an allegation or disclosure of abuse is made outside of office hours (e.g. at a weekend conference) to a staff member the individual should contact the DLP immediately, who will follow the steps above. If the DLP is unable to contact the HSE and it seems that a child is facing an immediate risk, the DLP will contact An Garda Síochána.

If the DLP cannot be contacted and it seems that a child is facing an immediate risk, the individual should contact the HSE or An Garda Síochána (if it is outside of office hours).

Follow-up contact with HSE should be made when their office re-opens.

Training

All Educate Together staff members will be given a copy of the Child Safeguarding Statement and will receive appropriate training.

Data retention

Educate Together retains personal information relating to allegations/suspicious of abuse made to staff by telephone, email, letter or in person as well as responses from the HSE or An Garda Síochána for an indefinite period. This data is confidential and kept securely in electronic form. Only the officially designated Data Controller and DLP have access to this data.

Role of the Patron

If the concern is not addressed at school level or if the concern involves a member of the board of management of a school, it may be necessary for the Patron to act. Existing child protection procedures make provision for the patron to be informed by the board of management where a child protection report involving a member of a board of management has been submitted to the HSE. The patron should determine if any action is necessary regarding the member's continued role on the board of management.

If the HSE are not satisfied with the school's role or cooperation during the course of their work, they may contact the DES or the patron. The patron, in accordance with Section 16 of the Education Act, with consent of the Minister, may dissolve a Board of Management or remove a member of a Board, where they are not satisfied that the functions of the board are not being effectively discharged (including any functions relating to child protection) or where there are good and valid reasons (including reasons related to child protection) for removing that Board member.

Children and young people under the age of 18 participating in events or attending the National Office

From time to time children may attend or participate in events organised by or on behalf of the national office. Occasionally children may be present in our national office either accompanying an adult or by request to participate in a meeting/event.

Definition: a parent/guardian or 'in loco parentis' for instance, the child's school teacher, relative or any other adult to whom responsibility for the child has been given by the parent/guardian will be referred to in this policy as parent/guardian.

Policy CP003 - Children and young people under the age of 18 participating in events or attending the National Office		
Applies to	Affects	Authority
CEO All Educate Together National Office staff	All Educate Together National Office Staff	CEO
Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/ Last Review:	March 2018	

Children are only permitted on the premises of the National Office or at an Educate Together event if accompanied by a parent/guardian/responsible adult. The child always remains the responsibility of the parent/guardian/ responsible adult, except for exceptional circumstances outlined below.

In the case of a national event that is hosted by a school, The National Office staff member organising the event will make it clear to the school that any children of the school attending or hosting tours or activities are the responsibility of the school and that the National Office is not taking over any of the school's responsibilities in relation to Child Protection or other safety issues during the proceedings.

If an adult attends a meeting or event accompanied by a child for whom they have responsibility, the adult has responsibility for and must supervise the child at all times.

Educate Together reserves the right at its absolute discretion to refuse entry to meeting or events.

If children are attending an event or the national office as presenters or participants, the National Office staff organising the event will ensure that the school(s) concerned has/have appointed a responsible adult who will be responsible for the children during the event. The school will ensure that it adheres to the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017 in the appointment of this person. This person will be clearly identified to National Office staff members working at the event and all matters of concern will be communicated directly to him/her.

Schools are responsible for obtaining and retaining consent for attendance of children at Educate Together events. Written confirmation of this by email, letter or consent form (depending on the event), will be sought from the school by the National Office.

Children attending our second level schools, may occasionally participate in events unaccompanied. In these circumstances the relevant national office staff member must obtain written consent from the parent/guardian concerned using the form provided in Appendix. It is the Parent/guardians responsibility to ensure suitable travel arrangements are in place for children.

All such written consents will be stored in line with our data protection policy.

Educate Together has appointed a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Deputy DLP. These staff members will be trained in these roles and their details will be displayed in the National Office.

If a staff member has concerns for the child's safety, or the child makes a child protection disclosure, the staff member should follow the procedure for the disclosure of a child protection concern to the National Office, CP002.

Management of images of children in Educate Together media

Educate Together makes extensive use of images of children in its communications and promotional material. This document details the standards and conditions of use Educate Together will adhere to in capturing, storing and publishing images of children.

The overarching purpose of this procedure is to ensure children are not inappropriately depicted in any image captured or published by Educate Together.

All staff members or photographers commissioned by Educate Together involved in capturing, processing, publishing or storing images of children are expected to always act responsibly and with this objective in mind.

Definition: As referred to in this policy, a child's image means both still and movie images of a child held on any media. For the purposes of this document, the term "image" includes audio and video content. In this definition, it is also assumed that a child's image is an image of sufficient size and quality that it could be reasonably assumed that the child could be identified.

Capturing and use of images of Children

<i>Policy CP004 - Management of images of children in Educate Together media</i>		
Applies to	Affects	Authority
CEO All Educate Together National Office staff	All Educate Together National Office staff	CEO
Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/ Last Review:	March 2018	

Educate Together staff attending school or national office events with the intention of taking photographs or capturing video must alert the school principal (if attending on behalf of a school) or parent/guardian as appropriate, in advance of images being taken and will only proceed to film or photograph with written consent. If a spontaneous or unplanned opportunity arises verbal consent can be obtained once it is followed by written consent before any image is stored or used. Staff members will also follow any restrictions or limits required by the school.

Educate Together staff will provide an assurance that any images captured will only be used with the express permission of the school or parent/guardian. Staff are recommended to carry identification and be prepared to offer an explanation for the work, if working in public or private places particularly where spontaneous or unplanned images are recorded.

Educate Together staff will only capture images of children at national events when instructed to do so by the staff member in charge of this at the event. At such events, efforts must be made to ensure that attendees are aware that filming may take place.

All images captured by Educate Together staff at school or national events are the property of Educate Together and cannot be used by individual staff members for personal use. Images of children will only be used by Educate Together to illustrate the nature of its work. Educate Together images of children will not be lent or issued to third parties without the express written consent of the parent/guardian.

Educate Together will only use images of children in print or online (on websites or social media pages) where express written consent of the parent/guardian and the child if aged over 13 years has been obtained. This includes; Educate Together's Websites, Facebook, social media and online platforms.

Educate Together will not identify or name individual children in captions accompanying an image without securing the express written consent of the parent/guardian and the child if aged over 13 years.

Images of children posted to Educate Together's social media platforms (e.g. Facebook) by followers should conform to the standards Educate Together maintain for their own images. Images posted by followers or contributors in breach of Educate Together image policies will be removed.

General guidelines to be followed in all cases:

- Where possible images should capture groups rather than individual activities
- Image capture should generally be of children at events, in class or at play
- No images should be taken of children that would breach their privacy or impinge upon their personal dignity (changing rooms, bathrooms, use of physical aids) etc.
- When taking images, staff should not in any circumstances capture any images of children in distress or embarrassment
- The children should be appropriately dressed.

Storage of images of Children

Educate Together will take reasonable and practical steps to protect images of children.

Physical images and physical storage media (tapes, disks etc.) involving images of children will be stored in secure filing spaces in the National Office.

Digital files involving images of children will be stored in line with our data protection policy.

Copyright

Educate Together owns the copyright of all images taken by its staff members on its behalf.

Educate Together recognises the copyright of the originators of an image and will use said images only under the terms of its usage agreement.

Consent may be withdrawn at any time by Parent/guardian or child in writing for future use of an image.

Third Party Usage

Educate Together will provide rights to reproduce children's images that it owns to approved third parties (e.g. national/local media, educational publishers) only where additional usage written consents have been secured from the subject of the image if aged between 13 to 18 years of age and the relevant school/parent/guardian (as appropriate) and where a manager has given written permission, having specifically checked, and is reasonably convinced that the image or images will be appropriately used and protected.

The Communications Section of the National Office will maintain a file of approved third parties and will update the same on an annual basis or more frequently if circumstances require.

The overarching purpose of this procedure is to ensure that children are not inappropriately depicted in any image provided by Educate Together to third parties and that as far as possible those third parties will handle such images responsibly.

All staff members involved in capturing, processing, publishing or storing images of children are expected to act at all times responsibly and with these objectives in mind.

Appendix

Consent form for attendance and images at Educate Together events:

Event for which consent is being given:	
Location of event:	
Date of event:	
Name for whom consent is being given:	
Address/school:	
Contact number:	
Email:	
Name of person consenting (please print):	
Relationship to child:	

I confirm that I consent to the above-named attending this event.

I confirm that photographs of the above named may be used by Educate Together with their consent.

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Signed Parent/Guardian/School

Signed attendee if aged 13-18 years (second level)

Date:

Date:
