

An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta,
Corn a Madadh,
Baile Atha Luain,
Co. na hIarmhí.



Department of Education and Science,
Cornamaddy,
Athlone,
Co. Westmeath

Circular 0046/2007

To: The Principals of all Primary Schools

Child Protection Procedures for Persons Employed by the Department of Education & Science.

The Department of Education & Science has recently introduced revised child protection procedures for its own staff, the purpose of which is to provide direction and guidance to Department staff in responding to allegations or complaints of child abuse which are made to the Department. The revised procedures are based on *Children First*, the Department of Health & Children's national guidelines for the protection and welfare of children and take account of the *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools* which issued in 2001.

Statutory responsibility for child protection rests with the Health Services Executive (HSE) and it is not the function of the Department to investigate allegations of child abuse. However, where an allegation or complaint of child abuse which relates to a school is brought to its attention, the Department has a responsibility to ensure that the information received in this regard is passed on to the relevant school and to the HSE (or An Garda Síochána, as appropriate) for consideration. It is also incumbent on the Department to request from a school, without delay, confirmation that an allegation or complaint which is brought to its attention is being dealt with in accordance with the prescribed *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools*.

In dealing with any allegation of child abuse, the primary concern of Department staff must be the welfare and protection of children while staff must also be alert to the right of persons to their good name. Upon receipt of information regarding alleged child abuse, the Department will refer the details to the Designated Liaison Person in the relevant school without making any judgement on the substance or truth of the allegation/ complaint received. All communication with the school will be conducted through the Principal Officer in the relevant section of the Department and the principle of confidentiality as set out in the Guidelines for Schools will be observed. The Department will, simultaneously, notify the HSE of the information received indicating that the matter has been referred to the school for appropriate attention.

The school will be requested to confirm to the Department that the matter is being dealt with in accordance with the prescribed guidelines for schools as well as indicating whether it was reported to the appropriate authorities for investigation.

Queries in relation to the Guidelines may be addressed to Primary Administration Section, Dept. of Education & Science, Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath, telephone 090 6483600.

Yours sincerely

Johnny Bracken
Principal
13 June, 2007