Protocol for Authorising Immediate Action in Child Safeguarding Cases

(Temporary Absence of an Employee from School Duties)

In Line with Appendix C of the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025,

Protocol for Immediate Protective Action Concerning an Employee

Child Safeguarding

1.Purpose of this Protocol

The purpose of this protocol is to provide clear procedures for the authorisation of immediate protective action where concerns arise that may require an employee to be immediately absented from school duties for child safeguarding reasons.

This protocol is implemented in accordance with:

- The Department of Education and Youth's *Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025;*
- Appendix C of the Procedures;
- The school's Child Safeguarding Statement;
- Relevant employment legislation and natural justice principles.

2. The welfare and protection of children is the paramount consideration in all decisions–

This protocol applies to:

- All teaching staff;
- SNAs;
- Ancillary staff;
- Volunteers;
- Contractors;
- Any adult engaged by the school who may have access to children.

3.Guiding Principles

In implementing this protocol, the school shall ensure that:

- Child safety is prioritised at all time
  - Any action taken is precautionary and protective in nature;
  - The employee concerned is treated fairly and with dignity;
  - Confidentiality is maintained as far as possible;
  - Decisions are proportionate and based on risk assessment;
  - The presumption of innocence is respected;
  - Natural justice and fair procedures apply.

4. Circumstances Where Immediate Action May Be Considered

Immediate protective action may be considered where:

- An allegation, concern, disclosure, or piece of information suggests a child may be at immediate or potential risk of harm;
- There is a concern regarding inappropriate conduct by an employee towards a child;
- There is a concern that continued presence in the workplace may:
    - place children at risk;
    - impede an investigation;
    - interfere with evidence or witnesses;
    - undermine confidence in safeguarding

The school acknowledges that immediate action is not a disciplinary sanction and does not imply guilt.

5. Authority to Authorise Immediate Action

During School Hours

The Principal has authority to implement immediate protective measures on behalf of the Board of Management where urgent child safeguarding concerns arise.

In the Absence of the Principal

The Deputy Principal may implement immediate protective measures where necessary.

Role of the Chairperson

The Chairperson of the Board of Management shall be informed immediately and consulted as soon as practicable.

Board of Management Authority

The Board of Management retains overall responsibility for decisions relating to administrative leave or precautionary absence in accordance with Department procedures.

6. Immediate Protective Measures Available

Pending further assessment or advice, the following measures may be considered individually or collectively:

a. Removal from direct contact with students;
b. Increased supervision;
c. Reassignment of duties;
d. Restriction of access to certain areas;
e. Temporary administrative leave/precautionary absence from the workplace;

f. Direction to leave the premises immediately where necessary for child protection reasons.

Any measure imposed shall be the least restrictive necessary to protect children.

7. Procedure for Authorising Immediate Absence from School- (5 steps)

Step 1 - Concern Arises

A child safeguarding concern is reported to, observed by, or received by:

- The Principal;
- Deputy Principal;
- Designated Liaison Person (DLP);
- Chairperson of the Board;
- Another staff member.

The concern shall immediately be brought to the attention of the DLP/Principal or in the absence of the DLP, the DDLP, the Deputy Principal.

Step 2 - Preliminary Risk Assessment

The Principal/DLP shall conduct an immediate preliminary risk assessment considering:

- the nature of the concern;
- immediacy of any risk to children;
- access of the employee to children;
- advice received from Tusla and/or An Garda Siochana where applicable;
- the need for urgent protective action.

Step 3 - Consultation

Where feasible and appropriate, the principal shall consult urgently with:

- the Chairperson of the Board of Management;
- Tusla;
- An Garda Siochana (where applicable);
- The school's legal advisor (Ecclesiastical Insurance) or CPSMA support where necessary.

In exceptional circumstances where delay may place children at risk, the principal may act immediately prior to consultation.

Step 4 - Authorisation of Immediate Action

Where deemed necessary, the employee may be directed to:

- cease duties immediately;
- avoid contact with pupils;
- leave the school premises;
- remain away from work on a precautionary basis pending further direction.

The employee shall be informed that:

a. the action is precautionary;
b. it is not a disciplinary sanction;
c. it does not imply any finding of wrongdoing;
d. the measure is being implemented in the interests of child protection.

Step 5 - Communication with Employee

The employee shall, where practicable:

- be informed privately;
- be treated respectfully and professionally;
- be advised of the general nature of the concern (subject to legal/safeguarding limitations);
- be advised to seek support and representation;
- be informed of the next procedural steps.
- A written record of the direction and rationale shall be maintained.

8. Record Keeping

The Principal/DLP shall maintain secure confidential records including:

a. details of the concern;
b. actions taken;
c. consultations undertaken;
d. rationale for decisions;
e. times/dates of decisions;
f. communications issued.

Records shall be stored securely in accordance with GDPR and child protection record requirements.

9. Confidentiality

All parties shall maintain strict confidentiality.
Information shall only be shared on a need-to-know basis and in accordance with:

a. Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025;
b. GDPR;
c. Data Protection legislation;
d. Fair procedures obligations.

10. Board of Management Review

Where immediate absence from school duties has been authorised:

a. The Board of Management shall convene as soon as practicable;
b. The Board shall review the protective measures;
c. The Board shall determine ongoing arrangements in line with advice

11. Employee Supports

The employee shall be advised of available supports including:

a. Employee Assistance Service;
b. union/professional representation;
c. occupational health supports where appropriate.

12. Relationship with Other Procedures

This protocol operates alongside:

a. the school Child Safeguarding Statement;
b. staff Code of Conduct;
c. disciplinary procedures;
d. relevant Department circulars and procedures.

13. Ratification and Review

This protocol was ratified by the Board of Management

On: 24th September 2026

Chairperson:

Principal: Derek Liddle

Date for review: September 2027