

# CHILD CARE POLICY & GUIDELINES

## A. SAFETY AND WELFARE POLICY STATEMENT

**Rockbrook Park School will take all reasonable steps, through its policy guidelines and procedures, to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the young people involved in its educational and other activities. It is committed to providing a safe environment that enables young people to develop their full potential as individuals while protecting them from all harm.**

## B. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Health & Children produced "Our Duty to Care" (2003) document for organisations working with children and young people, offering a guide to good policy and practice in order to meet their legal and moral obligations. Rockbrook Park School has adopted its recommendations and has incorporated them into its guidelines and procedures. Rockbrook Park School has also taken into account the document "Our Children, Our Church" (Dec 2005) produced by the Irish Catholic Hierarchy. **These policy guidelines should be read in conjunction with those provided by DES for secondary schools, and updated from time to time (see in particular DES 0065/2011 Child Protection Procedures for secondary schools, which postdates these guidelines here). If there is a difference in understanding between these guidelines and those provided by DES then the DES policy takes precedent.**

The terms 'child', 'children' and 'young people' throughout the document denote those under 18 years of age (except those who are or have been married), who attend school or participate in activities for which Rockbrook is responsible.

'Child abuse' occurs when the behaviour of someone in a position of greater power causes harm to a child. The term abuse has only recently replaced 'cruelty to children' and 'battered babies'. In 1989 The United Nations adopted *The Convention on the Rights of a Child*, stating that children are worthy of respect equal to that enjoyed by all citizens. According to that convention, to frustrate the natural development of a child constitutes 'child abuse'.

## **Definitions of Abuse** (see Appendix 4 for the definitions in *Children First*)

- **Physical** – actual or likely physical injury to a child or failure to prevent physical injury. Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.
- **Sexual** – actual or likely exploitation of a child or adolescent to meet the adult's sexual needs. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact or may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in pornography or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- **Neglect** – the persistent or severe neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger resulting in significant impairment of the child's health or development.
- **Emotional** – actual or likely adverse effects on the emotional and behavioural development of the child caused by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.

## C. ROCKBROOK CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE IN WORKING WITH CHILDREN

All adults working with young people must maintain the highest professional standards in their work and in their relationships with young people. Set out below is the Rockbrook code of good practice to be followed by all involved in this valuable work with young people under 18 years of age. Before participating in classes /activities carried out on behalf of Rockbrook, teachers, staff members, leaders and helpers/volunteers must agree to abide by this code. For clarity "Leaders" are adults (other than teaching staff) who have an ongoing role in the provision of activities for young people, while "helpers" are those over the age of 16 involved only in specific activities / trips (under supervision).

### **Taking care of children and young people**

1. Staff, Leaders and helpers will endeavour to familiarise themselves with all guidelines distributed by Rockbrook on child protection and safety issues while involved in running activities carried out on behalf of ROCKBROOK. The ROCKBROOK Child Protection Officer will ensure that details of all these guidelines reach each staff member, leader and helper working with young people and that they are properly trained in them.
2. Staff, leaders and helpers working for ROCKBROOK will treat each young person with equal respect and consideration, without favouritism, and ensure his or her safety and welfare at all times.

3. Staff, leaders and helpers working for ROCKBROOK will take great care over whatever they say to young people and also the way in which they say it at all times. All situations, actions and language that compromise a relationship of trust with young people are to be avoided.
4. Staff, leaders and helpers are to: a) avoid taking risks with the safety of young people; and b) avoid any situations that could lead to misinterpretations, difficulties or accusations of abuse. Training will be made available on practical applications of these principles.
5. Under no circumstances should ROCKBROOK personnel give alcohol, tobacco or drugs to children or young people. Only age-appropriate language, material on media products (such as camera phones, internet, video) and activities should be used when working with children and young people. All materials used in classrooms should respect the ethos of the school.
6. Staff, leaders and helpers are to be clear about what is appropriate and inappropriate physical contact with young people, avoiding any contact that could be misunderstood. Practical examples will be outlined in their training on such issues.
7. Staff, leaders and helpers are to avoid physical horseplay. They shall also avoid taking part in contact games where there is a danger that others might misinterpret their actions, no matter how innocently intentioned. Practical examples will be outlined in their training on such issues.
8. If a young person wishes to speak exclusively with a staff member, leader or helper, or vice versa, this one-to-one conversation shall take place in a public place or in rooms designed so as to be open to view by others, or with the door ajar.

### **Taking care of activities**

9. All activities are to be planned thoroughly by staff and/or leaders, so as to reduce to a minimum any times or situations where it may be possible for young people to be abused, such as when contact is unobserved.
10. All staff, leaders and helpers will have a clearly specified role within each activity, to be understood by both them and the young people in attendance. In this way, no one will be in contact with young people who does not have a reason to be present at the activity in an official capacity.
11. In any ROCKBROOK activity, sleeping accommodation and changing facilities for young people and helpers under 18 should always be separate from such facilities for staff, leaders and helpers over 18. Where possible shower facilities will also be physically separate, or accessed at different times.
12. The leader of the activity will ensure that a risk assessment is carried out in the planning stage of each activity and that safety procedures (including those for first-aid provision) are followed at all times.

13. The leader of the activity will ensure that all in attendance know of safety and emergency procedures in *each* location where activities take place.
14. Signed parental consent must be obtained from parents or guardians prior to the participation of children and young people in events, activities and outings, which are not part of the standard school programme. The organisers should establish from parents or guardians whether the child or young person has any specific dietary requirements or medical or special needs.
15. A clear policy of consent should be agreed with parents and guardians on the taking of photographs and the making of video recordings of children involved in ROCKBROOK activities or events. This should also cover the generation of computer images. This is normally addressed (from 2010) on the students application form Photographs of children or young people must never be taken while they are in changing areas (for example, in a locker room or bathing facility).
16. For general safety purposes a minimum ratio of 1:12 will be maintained for off-site activities (such as hiking, trip away), although for class groups involved in standard class activity (e.g. a school visit to public locations, or a match) the ratio will be 1: 20. Where possible, the school seeks to involve two adult leaders in off –site activity
17. Staff or leaders should not undertake a car or minibus journey alone with a child or young person. An exception to this can be made by way of a notifiable breach of the guidelines. Such an exception should receive prior approval by someone in authority (e.g. management, another teacher or the boy’s parent) or in a position of responsibility. Such a notifiable breach of these guidelines could arise for example, when there is no other alternative for a child getting home. In such circumstances the adult giving the lift should inform the person in authority as to when the journey is happening. If in certain, less exceptional circumstances, there is only one adult available, there should be a minimum of two children present for the entire journey.
18. A clear indication of start and end times for any programmed activity will be published on information sheets by staff or leaders so that young people can arrive and leave promptly.
19. Parents or guardians will be asked to complete: a) a consent and contact form and b) a dietary and medical details form either annually or before any residential activity away from the school.
20. An Incident Report Form should be completed in the event of an accident or incident relating to a child.
21. An accurate record should be kept for each child and young person participating in activities including, but not limited to, attendance, programme details, medical information, etc. This record should include a copy of the signed parental/guardian consent form or letter.
22. A written record of staff, leaders and helpers (and occasional visitors) in attendance at events should be kept. There must be adequate, gender-appropriate, supervision for boys and girls.

23. On residential or outing activities under no circumstances should a lone adult share a bedroom or tent with a young person. If, in an emergency situation, an adult considers it necessary to be in a children's dormitory or bedroom without another adult they should (a) immediately inform another adult in a position of responsibility and (b) make a diary note of the circumstances.

### **Health & Safety issues**

24. Adequate and appropriate supervision should be provided in relation to all events and activities organized for children and young people by ROCKBROOK.
25. Management should ensure that buildings and/or facilities used for events and activities are suitable, safe and secure, that fire precautions are in place and that extinguishers are checked regularly. Access to a telephone at all times is essential in case of emergency.
26. Staff should ensure a first aid kit is readily available. This should be regularly checked and replenished. It is advisable that first aid training be provided for some staff and volunteers.
27. Everyone should be alert to the risk of injury involved in some contact sports, paying particular attention to the child's age and to any medical condition or disability. All should be aware of the school's accident policy.
28. Adequate insurance must be obtained to cover all activities being undertaken. In cases of uncertainty about the level of cover, check with the relevant insurance provider.
29. Where transport is being provided by the school, management should ensure that drivers and vehicles meet legal requirements. Where transport is being hired, management should ensure with the service provider that drivers and vehicles conform to legal requirements.

### **Recruiting, Training and Managing Personnel**

30. Clear job descriptions, skills descriptions and person specifications will be developed for all teaching or other posts.
31. Application forms should be used for recruitment to all posts. Applications should include all the statutory requirements regarding Garda vetting and clearance procedures in effect in Ireland at the time of application. The requirements of the DES with regard to recruiting of school personnel should always be followed.
32. Applicants should be required to provide the names of two referees who can attest to their suitability for working with children and young people.
33. Suitable applicants should be interviewed by an interview panel of at least two people with appropriate competence and authority.

34. Written references should be obtained in respect of all candidates being considered for appointment. All written references must be followed up by verbal contact with referees.
35. All personnel should undertake a programme of child protection training.
36. Up-to-date files should be kept in respect of all personnel; these should include application forms, references and other relevant documentation.
37. Ensure that all personnel are properly supervised and supported in order that issues of concern are promptly dealt with as they arise.

#### D. ROCKBROOK CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The policies outlined in this section aim to safeguard the welfare of young people while attending ROCKBROOK activities and also to protect those staff, leaders and helpers who work with them both from behaving in any way that might be well intentioned but inadvisable and from possible unfounded accusations.

1. The Board of ROCKBROOK have appointed Child Protection Coordinators as required by DES (designated child protection officer and deputy designated child protection officer). They are known to the young people and also to the staff, leaders and helpers involved in the work of ROCKBROOK and their names are on the official noticeboards of the school. For the purpose of this document they will be known as child protection co-ordinators (not officers): designated and deputy.
2. The Child Protection co-ordinators will receive necessary training as laid down by DES.
3. The contact details of the designated Coordinator will be readily available so that staff, young people, leaders and helpers will know how to approach him or her easily.
4. The Coordinators will keep abreast of all new developments in issues affecting the rights of young people. The Coordinators will report annually to the ROCKBROOK board of management on the implementation of child protection policies and procedures, including comments on the effectiveness of guidelines and any proposals for revision.
5. All staff, leaders and helpers involved in activities with young people will receive in service training to understand their role and responsibilities in safeguarding the young people under their care.
6. ROCKBROOK will take the greatest of care in the appointment of staff, leaders and helpers who work with young people and their training in the guidelines within which they carry out this valuable work.
7. As part of ROCKBROOK's Child Protection Policy, the vetting of all staff, leaders and helpers will take place. The vetting process includes: a) the completion of application and declaration forms; b) informal interviews; c)

references (which will be followed up) from people who have first-hand experience of his or her work with young people; d) the successful completion of a probationary period of two months; and e) police checks.

8. The following forms are contained in the Appendices:

- Appendix 1: Standard Reporting to authorities form
- Appendix 2: Volunteer Application and Declaration form
- Appendix 3: (Sample) Volunteer Reference form

## E. PROCEDURE FOR RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

### **a) Response on disclosure of alleged or suspected abuse**

1. If a young person tells a staff member, leader or helper about abuse to him/herself or to a third party by someone else working for ROCKBROOK, the staff member, leader or helper will listen carefully to what the young person says without interruption, accepting what is said without contradicting any statements made, and then offer immediate support to that young person at this difficult moment.
2. No promise of confidentiality shall be made since the staff member, leader or helper confided in has the duty at all times to report any accusation of abuse to the designated Coordinator. He or she is obliged to report it in every instance and the young person shall be made aware of this.
3. The young person will be reassured that the staff member, leader or helper takes seriously what is said, even if the staff member, leader or helper finds it difficult to believe.
4. The young person will be allowed to talk freely and questions shall be kept to a minimum. No leading questions or details will be asked. Any interviewing of a young person reporting abuse is a skilled task and needs to be carried out subsequently by a trained professional.
5. Handwritten notes should be taken of what has been said immediately following any accusation or report of a suspicion of abuse. These should be signed, timed and dated by the person confided in.
6. Contact shall be made immediately with the designated child protection co-ordinator (usually the principal) or the deputy child protection co-ordinator (usually the deputy principal) and all notes shall be handed over to him or her. Having brought the matter to the attention of the CP Coordinator it is left exclusively in his/her hands to take further action.
7. At no stage shall a staff member, leader or helper make a decision as to whether abuse has occurred. He or she should concentrate on contacting the designated person and maintain the utmost confidentiality over what has been said.

8. All young people, leaders and helpers will have the details of how to contact the CP Coordinator directly. Preferably, the child protection coordinator will be the initial person the young person confides in.
9. If there is danger of further or continued abuse and the staff member, leader or helper is unable to get advice from the CP Coordinator, then he or she shall, like any other citizen, contact the Gardaí directly.

Note:

The *Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998*, provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse "reasonably and in good faith" to the Health Board or An Garda Síochána. This means that even if a reported suspicion of child abuse proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the reporter had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report.

## **b) Actions following disclosure of abuse**

1. From the moment an accusation or suspicion is reported to him or her, the designated CP Coordinator will open a confidential file recording all notes and conversations in the course of the investigation, and will include subsequent advice given by the social services and Gardaí.
2. Confidentiality is to be maintained rigorously and notes and records kept in a secure place. The principle of confidentiality should apply, whereby only those that need to know should be told of a suspicion/allegation/disclosure of abuse and the number that need to be kept informed should be kept to a minimum.
3. The Coordinator will call together a ROCKBROOK Child Protection Management Team (*CPM Team*), appointed in advance by the Directors of ROCKBROOK, who are aware of current legal requirements and practices. The CPM team will normally be the Care Team in the school. The CPM Team role is to advise and support the Coordinators and to assist them when making decisions. Together with the Coordinator the CPM Team will,
  - a. oversee all action taken in response to accusations and suspicions of abuse;
  - b. ensure that the statutory agencies are involved with appropriate speed; and
  - c. ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard the interests of children.
4. The CP Coordinator, with the assistance of the CPM Team, will carry out a process of discernment in order to evaluate and clarify the situation. In some cases an accusation might arise from a misunderstanding, or even from a playful or malicious allegation, and such situations should be dealt with appropriately.
5. If the CPM Team considers that the allegation cannot responsibly be discounted, the civil statutory authorities will be brought in straight away. The CPM Team will always take immediate steps if a situation continues which could occasion further concern of abuse. The following examples would

constitute reasonable grounds for concern and should be reported to the appropriate Health Service Executive and to An Garda Síochána:

- a. Specific indication from the child that (s)he was abused;
  - b. An account by a person who saw the child being abused;
  - c. Evidence, such as an injury or behavior which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way;
  - d. An injury or behavior which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse. An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indicators of abuse, dysfunctional behavior;
  - e. Consistent indication over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.
6. This may mean:
- a. Clarifying or getting more information about the matter.
  - b. Where there is any doubt or uncertainty, consulting initially with the Health Service Executive to get advice;
  - c. Making a formal referral to the Health Service Executive or An Garda Síochána.
7. It is ROCKBROOK policy that the Health Service Executive and/or An Garda Síochána should be notified as soon as possible where there is reasonable suspicion that a criminal offence has been committed against a child.
8. A suspicion which is not supported by any objective indication of abuse or neglect, would not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern. However, these suspicions will be recorded or noted internally by the management as future suspicions may lead to the decision to make a report and earlier suspicions may provide important information for the statutory child protection agency or An Garda Síochána.
9. The CPM Team has a particularly important role when concerns have been expressed but are not supported by the HSE investigation. They may advise on the steps to be taken to assess risk and the subsequent management of participation in ROCKBROOK activities by the adult subject to the accusation or suspicion. In these cases also, the advice and involvement of the statutory services will always be considered.
10. The CP Coordinator will work closely with the statutory agencies involved in these matters. No information will be filtered or withheld by members of the CPM Team. From the start there needs to be full co-operation and consultation.
11. In making a report to the Health Board and/or An Garda Síochána, a Standard Reporting Form will be used, based on the form outlined in Appendix 3.
12. The parents/carers of the young person should be informed as soon as possible. Advice should be taken from the statutory authorities as to how this may best be done.
13. In consultation with the statutory authorities, the person subject to the allegation or suspicion of abuse will be approached and advised of the serious

- situation that has developed. He or she will be informed of the fact that the allegation has been made against him/her and the nature of the allegation. He or she will take leave of his or her ROCKBROOK responsibilities promptly or might undertake to work only under supervision, totally without prejudice, until the investigation process has been completed.
- a. Note: If an allegation is made against an employee of ROCKBROOK, the matter will be dealt with directly by the CPM Team. All communication with the employee should be carried out by the designated director of the board of management of ROCKBROOK, usually the chairman, not by the CP Coordinator.
  - b. Note: If an allegation is made against a priest of the Opus Dei Prelature who works or assists in ROCKBROOK, the matter must also be referred directly to the current CP designated person of the Prelature.
14. The person subject to the allegation will be allowed to explain his or her words and actions as fully as possible, with the assistance of others and with the benefit of legal advice, and in writing. This information will be passed on to Health Service Executive or An Garda Síochána when the formal report is being made. Every effort will be made to conduct this process efficiently and confidentially so that the reason for a temporary absence from work with young people is not publicly known.
  15. Everything possible will be done to protect the good name and privacy of leaders and helpers against whom an allegation is made, especially while an accusation remains unproven. Counseling and support will be offered throughout the investigative process. It is also important to recognize that false, even malicious, allegations of abuse are sometimes made and that they can have very destructive effects on those concerned. This makes it important both that those accused are given proper support while an initial process of discernment is taking place, and that appropriate action is taken to reinstate individuals quickly when allegations are found to be false. Appropriate action should be taken to hold the makers of malicious allegations to account.
  16. Should it be concluded that only false or unfounded accusations have been made, vigilance in this case will cease and the matter be closed. The leader or helper will then be confirmed in his or her former role by the CPM Team, with his or her reputation untarnished.
  17. If an inconclusive evaluation remains, the CPM Team, in consultation with the statutory agencies, will decide on how best to proceed, all the while ensuring that the person accused or under suspicion is not prejudiced in any way.
  18. On the other hand, any person found guilty of abuse by the competent authorities will be permanently barred from any involvement in ROCKBROOK activities.

**c) Outcome of investigation, care of victim and accused**

1. The various outcomes of investigations on allegations of child abuse are described in detail in chapter 11 of the document *Our Children, Our Church*.
2. The response to a victim of alleged abuse must take account of the profound effects of child abuse. The CPM Team, in consultation with those in closer contact with the victim, will assess the most appropriate action to take regarding the care of the victim and of his/her family.
3. The CP Coordinator should regularly review the support being provided to victims and their families.
4. A person who has been accused of child abuse will require emotional, spiritual, legal and practical support. It is important that the person accused receives reassurance that the necessary supports will be provided. The CPM Team, in consultation with the statutory authorities, will decide on how best to provide the adequate support to the person accused and to members of his family that might require it.

## F. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

1. *Our Children, Our Church*, Irish Bishop's Conference and CORI (Dublin 2005)
2. *Our Duty to Care, "Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children"*, Department of Health & Children (Dublin 2003)
3. *Child Protection for the Youth Work Sector, "Code of Good Practice"*, Department of Education & Science (Dublin 2002)
4. *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children*, Department of Health & Children (Dublin 1999)

## G. GLOSSARY

### **Caregiver**

Any adult person who has responsibility for a child in the short or long term.

### **Child**

For the purpose of this code a 'child' means anyone who is under 18 years of age. This includes young people. In Ireland, the Child Care Act, 1991 defines a child as any person under the age of 18 years, excluding a person who is or who has been married.

### **Child Abuse**

Any form of harm inflicted on a child by someone in a position of greater power. Child Abuse can be categorized into different types including: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subject to more than one form of abuse at any given time.

### **Children/Young People**

For the purpose of this Code, children or young people who are attend activities or school at ROCKBROOK Park School.

**Child Protection Coordinator**

The CPC is the title given to the designated person in ROCKBROOK, appointed to deal with child protection concerns reported by volunteers, employees or young people.

**Child Protection Management Team**

The CPM Team is the title given to the designated team of people, appointed by ROCKBROOK to assist the CPC and oversee all actions taken in response to alleged abuse.

**Employees**

Paid staff in the school.

**Management**

Committee appointed by ROCKBROOK to oversee activities and the development of the school i.e. the board of management of Rockbrook.

**Statutory Authorities**

These are An Garda Síochána and the Health Boards. They are obliged under the law to investigate and intervene in child abuse cases.

**Volunteers/Leaders/Helpers**

Unpaid voluntary workers in centres or clubs.

Appendix 1

## Standard Reporting Form for Reporting Child Protection Concerns

1. Date of Report:
2. Name of person reporting:
3. Address of person reporting:
4. Relationship of reporting person with the child concerned:
5. Method of Report (telephone call, personal call to office):
6. Child's family details:

Surname: \_\_\_\_\_ Forename: \_\_\_\_\_  
D.O.B.: \_\_\_\_\_ Male/Female: \_\_\_\_\_  
Alias (known as): \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone No: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Correspondence address (if different): \_\_\_\_\_

7. State whether you consider your report to indicate (a) suspected or actual child abuse or (b) need for family support, giving reasons.

|           | Physical Abuse           | Sexual Abuse             | Emotional Abuse          | Neglect                  |
|-----------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Suspected | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Actual    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

8. Details of other family members/household members

| NAME | AGE | RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD | EMPLOYMENT/SCHOOL | LOCATION |
|------|-----|-----------------------|-------------------|----------|
|------|-----|-----------------------|-------------------|----------|

9. Name of other professionals involved with child or with parents/carers.

Public health nurse: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

General Practitioner: Any other agency or professional involved (please describe the nature of any involvement): \_\_\_\_\_



# Volunteer Application Form

Appendix 2

1. Name (Mr/Mrs/Ms) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Any other name previously known as \_\_\_\_\_

3. Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Tel. No. (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Mobile) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Date of Birth \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

5. Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

6. Please outline why you wish to become a volunteer/employee:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Please give details of any previous experience/involvement in schools/ youth work.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Do you suffer from any illness/disability/medical condition which may at times affect your ability to work with young people? If so, please give details:  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. Times available (Please indicate times when you will be available):

|           | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|-----------|-----|------|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| Morning   |     |      |     |       |     |     |     |
| Afternoon |     |      |     |       |     |     |     |
| Evening   |     |      |     |       |     |     |     |

9.1 Please supply the name, address, telephone numbers and position of two people (non-relative) who know you well and can provide us with a reference:

|       |       |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

Tel No. \_\_\_\_\_

Tel No. \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_

**Declaration:**  
**(confidential)**

10. Have you ever been convicted of a Criminal Offence or been the subject of a Caution or of a Bound Over Order?

Yes  No

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please state below the nature and date (s) of the offence(s):

Nature of Offence

Date of Offence

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

"I confirm that nothing within my personal or professional background makes me unsuitable for a post which involves working with children".

"I declare that the above information is true and agree that I will abide and accept the terms and conditions of membership/participation".

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**For Group/Office Use Only**

Checked by Phone

Visit

Letter

Checked by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## (Sample) Volunteer Reference Form

Mr/Ms \_\_\_\_\_ has expressed an interest in becoming a volunteer with this school and has given your name as a referee.

As this post involves substantial access to children and as an organisation committed to the welfare and protection of children, we are anxious to know if you have any reason to be concerned about this applicant being in contact with children or young people.

Yes  No

If you have answered yes, we will contact you in confidence.

If you are happy to complete this reference form, all information contained on the form will remain confidential and will only be shared with the applicant's immediate supervisor, should they be offered a volunteer position. We would appreciate your being extremely candid in your evaluation of this person.

How long have you known this person? \_\_\_\_\_

In what capacity? \_\_\_\_\_

What attributes does this person have which you would consider makes him/her a suitable volunteer?

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How would you describe his/her personality?

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Please rate this person on the following (please tick)

|                      | Poor | Average | Good | V. Good | Excellent |
|----------------------|------|---------|------|---------|-----------|
| Responsibility       |      |         |      |         |           |
| Maturity             |      |         |      |         |           |
| Self Motivation      |      |         |      |         |           |
| Motivation of Others |      |         |      |         |           |
| Trustworthiness      |      |         |      |         |           |
| Reliability          |      |         |      |         |           |

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Definition of Child Abuse – from *Children First***

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to more than one form of abuse at any given time.

*Children First* have adopted the following definitions:

### **Neglect**

Neglect is normally defined in terms of an omission, where a child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, or medical care.

Harm can be defined as the ill treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Whether it is significant is determined by his/her health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point. For instance, a child who suffers a series of minor injuries is not having his or her needs met for supervision and safety. A child whose ongoing failure to gain weight or whose height is significantly below average may be deprived of adequate nutrition. A child who consistently misses school may be deprived of intellectual stimulation. The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his/her well-being and/or development are severely affected.

### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a caregiver<sup>5</sup> and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's needs for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. It is rarely manifested in terms of physical symptoms.

Examples of emotional abuse include:

- a. persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming
- b. conditional parenting, in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviour or actions
- c. emotional unavailability by the child's parent/carer
- d. unresponsiveness, inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of a child
- e. premature imposition of responsibility on a child
- f. unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of a child's capacity to understand something or to behave and control himself in a certain way
- g. under or over protection of a child

- h. failure to show interest in, or provide age appropriate opportunities for a child's cognitive and emotional development
- i. use of unreasonable or over harsh disciplinary measures
- j. exposure to domestic violence.

Children show signs of emotional abuse by their behaviour (for example, excessive clinginess to, or avoidance of, the parent/carer), their emotional state (low self-esteem, unhappiness), or their development (non-organic failure to thrive). The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions become typical of the relationship between the child and parent/carer.

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury that causes significant harm to a child, including:

- a. shaking
- b. use of excessive force in handling
- c. deliberate poisoning
- d. suffocation
- e. Munchausen's syndrome by proxy (where parents fabricate stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness)
- f. allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.

### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his/her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others, for example:

- a. exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child
- b. intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
- c. masturbation in the presence of a child or involvement of the child in the act of masturbation
- d. sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal
- e. sexual exploitation of a child
- f. consensual sexual activity between an adult and a child under 17 years.

In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that, for the purposes of the criminal law, the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years. This means, for example, that sexual intercourse between a 16 year old girl and her 17 year old boyfriend is illegal, although it might not be regarded as child sexual abuse.

## **Other Forms of Abusive Behaviour Towards Young People**

Apart from the above very serious forms of abuse, volunteers and employees should also be on the alert for other forms of behaviour that may be harmful to young people. The following behaviours are unacceptable among young people, teachers, staff and volunteers:

### **Peer Abuse**

In some cases of abuse the alleged perpetrator will also be a child. In these situations the Child Protection Procedures should be adhered to for both the victim and the alleged abuser. If there is any conflict of interest between the welfare of the alleged abuser and the victim, the victim's welfare is of paramount importance.

### **Verbal abuse**

This can include name-calling, sarcasm, and criticism, making reference to some physical characteristic, destructive criticism, derogatory remarks and gestures.

### **Bullying**

Bullying behaviour can be defined as repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical which is conducted by an individual or group against others. Examples of bullying include: teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, extortion.

Bullying behaviour may take place in any setting whether it be in schools, the home, the Internet or in a youth services setting. In the first instance, it is the responsibility of volunteers/employees to deal with bullying which may take place within the organisation. The more extreme forms of bullying behaviour would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse, and are reportable to the statutory authorities. The school has a clear policy on countering bullying behaviour which is known to members of the school community. Incidents should be dealt with immediately.

### **Unwelcome behaviour**

This can include favouritism, exclusion, sexual harassment and sexual innuendo, humiliating and embarrassing others, deprivation of basic rights and harsh disciplinary regimes.

## **Child Care Safety and Welfare Policy Statement**

**Rockbrook Park School will take all reasonable steps, through its policy guidelines and procedures, to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the young people involved in its educational and other activities. It is committed to providing a safe environment that enables young people to develop their full potential as individuals while protecting them from all harm.**

**The designated child protection officer for the school is the principal, Mr Mark Hamilton. (Tel 086-0848005).**

**The deputy designated child protection officer is the deputy principal, Mr Joe Flanagan. (Tel 086-3949727)**

**The chairman of the board of management is Mr Barry O'Grady, 22 Cunningham Road, Dalkey. (Tel 086-6041932)**

**February 2013**