



Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2024

1 Introduction

The Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSP) for Equinox Education Service Ltd (EES) are Noel Doyle (087-9975625), Patrick Brennan (0871489159), and Rachel Hogan (+353831135129).

Equinox Education Services Ltd offer tailor made short term and long-term programs for individuals and groups throughout Ireland at various times of the year. Accommodation is for the most part in host families.

Who is covered by this policy

All adults who have any contact, in any form, with young persons aged under 18 are covered by this policy. This is a Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Safeguarding – Generally ‘looking after’ the welfare of young people in our care

Child Protection – Protecting children from direct and/or harmful behavior

Young learners – Students under the age of 18

Whilst the majority of this policy is applicable to all our programs the above-mentioned staff are responsible for reviewing and updating the policy on an annual basis at a minimum, or more frequently if required:

EES Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy:

Updated and reviewed by : _____

Signed : _____

Date of update / review : _____

Policy statement

Equinox Education Services Ltd (herein after referred to as EES) has a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for young people, EES staff provide them with the highest possible standard of care. EES is committed to devising and implementing policies so that everyone accepts their responsibilities to safeguard and protect children from harm and abuse. This means following procedures to protect children and report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate staff and authorities. Equinox Education Services Ltd is committed to ensuring that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount;
- all children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, race, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have rights in general and in particular the right to protection from all types of abuse
- all suspicions and allegations of abuse and poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately;
- all staff (paid/unpaid) are covered by this policy and all staff have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate person, normally the Designated Safeguarding persons, Manager, Director of Studies or Centre Manager;
- this policy is distributed to all staff, read by all staff and understood by all staff.

EES has a duty of care to safeguard all children from harm. All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. EES will ensure the safety and protection of all children through adherence to the Child Protection guidelines adopted by EES.

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989). The aim of this policy is to promote good practice, providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of EES and to allow staff to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues. This policy applies to both real world and online environments.

Policy aims

The aim of the EES Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice by providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of EES and to allow all staff to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

A child's rights

Anyone under the age of 18 is legally considered to be a child in IRELAND

- All children have rights. No one can take away a child's right to be safe.
- All children have a voice.
- All children have the right to say 'no' if any person tries to do something to them which they feel is wrong.
- All children have the right to be supported against bullies.
- All children must feel they can tell an adult of any incident that frightens or confuses them or makes them unhappy.
- All children must know that if they go to an adult for help, they will be listened to seriously and supported.
- All children have the right to be treated with respect and to be safeguarded from harm.

2 The EES code of conduct and promoting good practice

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school, amongst friends, and among various other events such as the sporting environment. You will have regular contact with young people, and you will play a central role in identifying cases where a student needs protection.

All suspicious cases of poor practice must be reported following the guidelines in this document.

The EES Code of Conduct

- All staff and responsible adults will promote an atmosphere of tolerance and respect and will actively challenge extremist views that threaten this atmosphere. Staff and responsible adults will promote core Irish values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and tolerance of different beliefs and cultures. Staff will report any concerns to one of the people identified at the start of the document.
- All staff and responsible adults need to set standards and to be excellent role models (for example they need to be somebody children can trust, use appropriate language, be punctual, be fair and not to have favorites, give clear instructions, know professional boundaries, be positive, react and respond appropriately to a variety of situations).
- All staff and responsible adults need to have appropriate appearance. Without this young people will not respect you.
- All staff and responsible adults should refrain from smoking, drinking alcohol and of course taking any form of illegal drugs.
- All staff and responsible adults should not swear in front of young learners.
- All staff and responsible adults should be aware of the correct action to take with regard to arranging transportation for young learners.

This Code of Conduct is built upon in the following sections which give examples of good practice and poor practice.

Good practice

All staff should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behavior in order to promote a child's welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

You should

- work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets).
- implement this policy at all times.
- remember, other people may misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned.
- challenge unacceptable attitudes of behavior from other members of staff or students
- set an example you wish and expect others to follow.
- treat all young people equally, avoiding favorites.
- respect a young person's right to personal privacy.
- make the experience of studying with EES fun and enjoyable: promote fairness, confront and deal with bullying.
- treat all young people (including disabled young people) equally, and with respect and dignity.
- put the welfare of each young person first, before winning or achieving goals.

- maintain a safe and appropriate distance with young children in your care (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them).
- avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people. Where any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly and with the consent of the young person. Physical contact can be appropriate so long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing and the young person's consent has been given. Keep any physical contact with a child brief and don't touch a child anywhere that would normally be covered by a swimming costume.
- use the procedure: demonstrate – ask permission – touch if you have to touch a child – for example to demonstrate a sporting technique. However, it is always best to avoid touching at all and simply to demonstrate the technique.
- Try to ensure that other students and if possible other staff members or group leaders are present if physical contact is prolonged or sensitive - for example to comfort a crying child, if someone is injured or if you have to separate fighting children.
- Ensure you work in pairs with the appropriate gender of staff doing the supervising if students have to be supervised in changing rooms.
- Be an excellent role model - this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognize the developmental needs and capacity of young people and disabled adults - avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given. This should be recorded in the incident books provided.
- Recognize if a student is developing a 'crush' on you. Do nothing that might be construed as encouraging this. Inform one of the above mentioned people. Never flirt with a student or make sexually suggestive or provocative comments, even in fun.

Poor practice

It is not always easy to distinguish poor practice from abuse. It is therefore NOT the responsibility of employees to make judgements about whether or not abuse is taking place. It is however their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and to act if they have concerns about the welfare of the child.

You should not

- spend time alone with young people away from others.
- betray a situation of trust
- permit abusive peer activities
- share changing rooms, washrooms, toilets or bedrooms with children. Always warn children before entering these places. Avoid being in these places with children unless absolutely necessary, and pay particular attention to avoid being alone with a child in these places. Always make sure you are there with another member of staff of the correct sex.
- take young people alone in a car on journeys, however short unless it is absolutely necessary e.g Medical Emergency .
- engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games or contact, including horseplay
- engage in inappropriate language with young people – writing, phoning, email or internet
- hit, throttle, push, kick or otherwise act aggressively either physically or verbally towards a child even in pretense
- share a room with a child
- take young people to your home where they will be alone with you
- allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- make sexually suggestive comments or threats to a child, even in fun
- reduce a child to tears as a form of control
- fail to act upon and record any allegations made by a child
- do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults, that they can do for themselves
- invite or allow children to spend time with you alone and unsupervised

N.B. It may sometimes be necessary for staff to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the child concerned and the group leader.

The EES Code of Conduct Card is issued to all members of staff.

IF IN DOUBT – REPORT IT!

3 Child protection, how to handle a disclosure and how to report suspicions of abuse

Overview

The Designated Safeguarding Persons in turn provide training to all members of staff. Their names and contact details are:

The Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSP) for Equinox Education Service Ltd (EES) are Noel Doyle (087-9975625), Patrick Brennan (0871489159), and Rachel Hogan (+353831135129).

We also operate a 24-hour emergency line. This is usually manned by the Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSP). If there is an issue outside of school hours and the emergency phone is called, whoever is holding the phone would make arrangements to have the child removed from a house immediately if the situation warrants it. That person would also contact the DSP immediately and he too would go to the house concerned to Managing Director on **087-9975625**.

Defining Child Abuse

Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional, or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm. Remember **P.E.N.S.**

Physical Abuse: This is where adults physically hurt or injure a young person e.g. hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, biting, scalding, suffocating, and drowning. Giving young people alcohol or inappropriate drugs would also constitute child abuse.

Emotional Abuse: This is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a young person, likely to cause severe and lasting adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve telling a young person they are useless, worthless, unloved, and inadequate or valued in terms of only meeting the needs of another person. Emotional abuse may occur when the young person is constantly criticized, given negative feedback, expected to perform at levels that are above their capability. Other forms of emotional abuse could take the form of name calling and bullying. Ill treatment of children, whatever form it takes, will always feature a degree of emotional abuse.

Neglect: This occurs when an adult fails to meet the young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, to an extent that is likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development. For example, failing to provide adequate food, shelter, and clothing, failing to protect from physical harm or danger, or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. Refusal to give love, affection and attention can also be a form of neglect. Neglect in sport could occur when a coach does not keep the young person safe or exposing them to undue cold/heat or unnecessary risk of injury.

Sexual Abuse: This occurs when adults (male and female) use children to meet their own sexual needs, whatever form this may take. Showing young people pornography or talking to them in a sexually explicit manner are also forms of sexual abuse.

Possible Indicators of Abuse

Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognize a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. Most people are not experts in such recognition, but indications that a child is being abused may include one or more of the following:

- unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
- an injury for which an explanation seems inconsistent.
- The young person describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them.
- another young person or adult expresses concern about the welfare of a young person.
- unexplained changes in a young person's behavior e.g., becoming very upset, quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper.
- inappropriate sexual awareness
- engaging in sexually explicit behavior
- nightmares, sleep problems,
 - sudden or unexplained personality changes/mood swings; seems withdrawn, angry, clingy,
 - shows significant changes in eating habits.
 - an older child behaving like a younger child, e.g., bedwetting or thumb-sucking
 - develops fear of particular places or resists being alone with particular child or young person for unknown reasons
 - shows resistance to routine bathing, toileting or removing clothes even in appropriate situations
 - play, writing, drawings or dreams include sexual or frightening images
 - refuses to talk about a secret he/she has with an adult or older child
 - stomach aches or illness, often with no identifiable reason
 - leaves clues that seem likely to provoke a discussion about sexual issues
 - uses new or adult words for body parts; engages in adult-like sexual activities with toys, objects or other children
 - develops special relationship with older friend that may include unexplained money, gifts or privileges
 - intentionally harming himself or herself, i.e., drug/alcohol use, cutting, burning, running away,
 - sexual promiscuity
 - develops physical symptoms, e.g., unexplained soreness, pain or bruises around genital or mouth;
 - sexually transmitted disease;
 - pregnancy

This list is of course not exhaustive.

What to do if you suspect abuse – how to report

We may become aware of possible abuse in various ways. We may see it happening, we may suspect it happening because of signs such as those listed above, it may be reported to us by someone else or directly by the young person affected. In the last of these cases, it is particularly important to respond appropriately.

If you suspect an adult (or another student/child) is a threat to a child in some way tell the Centre Manager or Designated Safeguarding Person immediately. If a student says or indicates that they are being abused, you should use the following guidelines without delay. You must act on the allegations made. You cannot ever ignore an allegation or suspicion.

Do:

- stay calm in the event of an allegation. Don't panic, don't over-react. It is extremely unlikely that the student is in immediate danger.
- Listen, hear and believe. **DO NOT INTERPRET OR PUT WORDS INTO THE MOUTH OF SOMEONE MAKING AN ALLEGATION**
- give time to the person to say what they want
- reassure & explain that they have done the right thing in telling. Explain that only those professionals who need to know will be informed
- **report the allegation or suspicion immediately to the Centre Manager or Designated Safeguarding Person.**

Don't:

- try to deal with it yourself
- gossip with colleagues about what has been said to you
- make a child repeat a story unnecessarily

What the Centre Manager or Designated Safeguarding Person will do

The person handling the disclosure will follow the principle of T.E.D. – Tell me, explain to me, describe to me.

- The Centre Manager or DSP will take a written statement from all parties involved.
- All contact between the child concerned and the alleged abuser should cease with immediate effect.
- The Centre Manager or DSP will speak to the person concerned to advise them of the allegations and advise them that no further contact is permitted.
- The Centre Manager or DSP will take appropriate action which may involve contacting external agencies, contacting agents / parents, suspending the member of staff concerned (or student) pending an investigation.
- If the Centre Manager or Staff Member the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the initial report must be made to the Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSP), who will decide whether or not to refer the allegation to Social Services and inform other relevant parties.

It is not the responsibility of anyone working for EES, in a paid or unpaid capacity, to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to the Centre Manager or Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSP). EES ensures all staff that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

Handling a disclosure by a child

Care must be taken to remain calm and to show support to the child throughout the disclosure phase. The following guidelines will help lessen the risk of causing more trauma to the child and/or compromising a criminal investigation during the disclosure phase. Ideally, a child making a disclosure should be taken immediately to the Centre Manager, or Designated Safeguarding Person.

What information should be recorded in the formal report?

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following:

- The child's name, age and date of birth of the child.
- The child's home address and telephone number.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.

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- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors, and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion, or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also, any indirect signs, such as behavioral changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents/ group leaders been contacted?
- If so, what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details.
- If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so, what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
- Where possible referral to the Garda or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

All reports will be reported to and recorded by one of the Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSP), or the Centre Manager. Only the nominated Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSP), and Centre Manager will have access to this file, and outside agencies as appropriate.

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information will be handled and disseminated on a need-to-know basis only. This includes the following people:

- the Centre Manager or Director of Studies
- the parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused.
- the person making the allegation.
- Social Services / An Garda Síochána
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child)

Information (e.g. incident reports) will be stored in a secure place with access limited to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

What can adults do to prevent sexually harmful behavior between children?

- Set and respect physical boundaries.
- Encourage children to also respect themselves and others.
- Demonstrate to children that it is all right to say “no” and that they need to accept “no” from others.
- Stay aware of how children are interacting with one another.
- Talk with children, and listen to what they have to say.
- Set clear guidelines

4 Responsibilities and duty to report/handling a disclosure

Duty to report

ALL EES staff have a duty to report any allegation or suspicion of inappropriate contact with children to line/senior managers. Report any suspicions to the Designated Safeguarding persons, Director of Studies or Centre Manager. All staff (paid or unpaid) have a responsibility to follow the guidance laid out in this policy and related policies, and to pass on any welfare concerns using the required procedures. We expect all staff (paid or unpaid) to promote good practice by being an excellent role model, contribute to discussions about safeguarding and to positively involve people in developing safe practices.

Failure to comply

Non-compliance with the policy on contact with students under 18 will result in disciplinary procedures.

EES have a duty to and will remove an individual from any activity where there is risk of harm to children. Employers have a 'duty to refer' the suspicion or allegation of an individual having inappropriate contact with young people to external authorities where there is risk of harm to children.

Internal enquiries

The Director of Studies or Centre Manager will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries. Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries, EES will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled.

Incidents that must be reported/recorded

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to the Director of Studies or Centre Manager and record the incident. You should also ensure the child's group leaders are informed:

- if you accidentally hurt someone
- if a student seems distressed in any manner
- if a child appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- if a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

Handling a disclosure by a child

What should you do if a child comes to you and tells you that they are being abused? It's normal to feel overwhelmed and confused in this situation. Child abuse is a difficult subject that can be hard to accept and even harder to talk about. Children who are abused are often threatened by the perpetrators to keep the abuse a secret. Thus, telling an adult takes a great amount of courage. The following guidelines will help lessen the risk of causing more traumas to the child and/or compromising a criminal investigation during the disclosure phase.

5 Specific areas of abuse

Child sexual exploitation

Official definition of child sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterized in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.

This definition of child sexual exploitation was created by the IRELAND National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People (NWG) and is used in statutory guidance for England

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse in which children are sexually exploited for money, power or status. Children or young people may be tricked into believing they're in a loving, consensual relationship. They might be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol. They may also be groomed online. Some children and young people are trafficked into or within the IRELAND for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation can also happen to young people in gangs

Child sexual abuse online

When sexual exploitation happens online, young people may be persuaded, or forced, to:

- send or post sexually explicit images of themselves
- take part in sexual activities via a webcam or smartphone
- have sexual conversations by text or online.

Abusers may threaten to send images, video or copies of conversations to the young person's friends and family unless they take part in other sexual activity. Images or videos may continue to be shared long after

Who sexually exploits children and young people?

We don't know a great deal about who commits child sexual exploitation. Identifying abusers is difficult because:

- data often isn't recorded or is inconsistent or incomplete
- children and young people often only know their abuser by an alias, nickname or appearance
- victims may be passed between abusers and assaulted by multiple perpetrators
- children and young people are often moved from location to location and abused in each place
- young people may be given alcohol or drugs
- The number of known perpetrators is likely to be far higher than those reported.

People who sexually exploit children are often described as highly manipulative individuals. They exert power over young people through physical violence, emotional blackmail or financial pressure, for example holding them in debt. To maintain control or to distance children and young people from those who may be able to protect them, abusers create or exploit weaknesses such as: To maintain control or to distance children and young people from those who may be able to protect them, abusers create or exploit weaknesses such as:

- being isolated/distant from friends and family
- disengagement from services such as education or health
- challenging or criminal behavior

The focus on manipulation and control has similarities with domestic violence, although more research is needed to establish this link and fully explore motivations for child sexual exploitation

Gender, age and ethnicity of perpetrators

The Children's Commissioner's study found that:

- 72% of abusers were male
- 10% of abusers were female
- in 18% of cases gender wasn't disclosed

The evidence indicated that the age range of abusers was from 12 to 75 years. Where ethnic group was recorded, the majority of perpetrators were White and the second largest group were Asian.

6 Safer recruitment

EES recognizes that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children in EES. Pre-selection checks include the following:

EES follows a policy of safer recruitment which means:

- References will include a specific enquiry as to whether there is any impediment to the employee being employed in a situation where s/he will have responsibility for the care of or substantial access to children
- A self-disclosure form about any criminal record and suitability to work with young people must be completed prior to employment
- All staff to be Garda Vetted
- Staff must provide proof of identity and abode prior to taking up employment with EES (This is required for Garda Vetting also)

All advertisements for staff and host families will state 'EES follows a policy of safer recruitment'. Furthermore, some of the questions asked in interview will be specifically designed to explore the candidate's attitude towards working with young learners. In the event that we have to employ someone before receiving a formal Vetting disclosure, additional checks on suitability will be undertaken by way of obtaining extra references (over and above 2), both verbal and written.

Evidence or disclosure of a criminal record will not necessarily result in a candidate not being appointed to a position or being a host family. Naturally, the nature of the disclosure will be taken into account and if deemed irrelevant to dealing with young people, the candidate may well be successful if all other employment criteria are met. Such issues will of necessity be dealt with on a case by case basis.

7 Disclosure and Garda Vetting

It is EES policy to carry out Garda Vetting check all teaching, social and administrative staff prior to employment. In addition to this it is currently EES policy to check the main householder in every host family. Also every other adult member in a host family will complete the EES Child Declaration form. References will be followed up for host families and such references will specifically ask if the referee knows of any reason why a particular family is not suitable to host people under the age of 18.

8 Professional boundaries

The following are some examples of where professional boundaries may be exceeded

- Personal relationships between a member of staff (paid or unpaid) and a student is prohibited. This includes relationships through social networking sites such as Facebook and Snapshot, etc.
- Use of abusive language is prohibited
- Use of punishment or chastisement is prohibited
- Passing on personal contact details to students is prohibited
- Taking students to a member of staff's home is prohibited
- Selling to or buying items from a student is prohibited
- Accepting responsibility for any valuables on behalf of a student is prohibited
- Accepting money as a gift/ borrowing money from or lending money to a student is prohibited

9 Training

All current staff have received Childcare training. New staff receive the same training as part of the induction process. All staff sign a declaration that they have received and understood this training and comprehend the importance of the issues raised.

- EES undertakes to provide training sessions and to promote understanding and awareness of the EES Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. This will happen
 - via the induction process with all new members of staff
 - via EES Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
 - via making 'Safeguarding' a standing item on all meeting agendas, thereby raising awareness
- EES undertakes to review on an annual basis at a minimum the practice and implementation of its Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and to provide any such further training as may be deemed necessary
- EES will ask all staff (existing and new) to complete a course in Basic Awareness of Child Protection Issues
- EES will assist staff through training to
 - analyse their own practice against established good practice, and to ensure their practice is not likely to result in allegations being made
 - recognize their responsibilities and demonstrate how to report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse
 - respond to concerns expressed by a child or young person.
 - work safely and effectively with children.
 - receive advisory information outlining good practice and informing staff about what to do if they have concerns about the behavior of an adult towards a young person.
 - gain national first aid training (where necessary).

Inductions

All employees will be required to undergo an interview. All employees receive an induction, during which:

- checks will be made that self-disclosure forms have been completed.
- qualifications will be substantiated.
- the job requirements and responsibilities will be clarified.
- child protection procedures will be explained and training needs will be identified.
- staff will be asked sign up to the organization's Code of Ethics and Conduct and Child Protection policy by signing the Self Declaration form.

10 Electronic contact with students under the age of 18

Staff must exercise the same discretion and maintain the same professional distance in any electronic contact with children (anyone under 18) as they would in normal day-to-day life. Electronic contact includes telephone communications (including texting) and on-line environments. Broadly speaking, never engage in any electronic communication with any students under the age of 18. In particular:

Good practice

- Never initiate electronic contact with a child unless for clear pedagogical purposes that have been sanctioned by the Director of Studies or Centre Manager.
- If a child contacts you electronically, keep your tone friendly, professional and neutral.
- Avoid situations that involve the exchange of personal information, personal photos, virtual gifts or the use of any application that suggests or encourages the sharing of personal feelings.
- If a child seeks to develop an inappropriate personal relationship with you electronically, do nothing to encourage this; inform the Director of Studies or Centre Manager and send a copy of any relevant communications. Do not engage in electronic communication with a student.
- If a child confides sensitive information to you electronically, such as details of abuse, react as described in this policy document, 'If a child discloses abuse'. Record the details and send a copy of all relevant communications to the Director of Studies or Centre Manager.
- Do not initiate or accept 'friendship' requests from children, however innocent these requests may seem, as this provides access to photos and other intimate details of each other's personal lives.
- Do not establish or seek to establish social contact with under 18s/pupils during or after the course.
- Do not give personal email addresses or personal phone numbers to students under 18.
- Do not communicate via email, text, phone or social networking sites, blogs, web pages or instant messaging services with under 18s.
- Do not post photos or videos of students under 18 on any social networking sites.
- Do not distribute (by any means) images or information about students of any age.
- Always avoid becoming personally involved in a student's personal affairs.
- Always be aware that personal web profiles can be viewed by anyone and therefore you should be especially cautious about public web profiles and privacy settings.
- Always seek advice from a line manager if an under 18 seeks to establish social contact with you. **Normally, you should never do this**

Use of photographic/filming equipment

There is evidence that some people have used sporting events and summer camps as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young and disabled people in vulnerable positions. All members of staff should be vigilant and any concerns should be reported to the Director of Studies or Centre Manager and record the incident. There is no intention to prevent teachers/staff using video equipment or photography legitimately. However:

- group leaders and students must give their consent to any photography
- any photography/filming must take place in an open, public area and never in isolation
- the reasons why any photography/filming is taking place must be fully explained to those concerned.
- the results of any photography/filming must be carefully stored, controlled and used only for the purpose for which they were intended.

11 Health and Safety

Part of providing a safe and secure environment for all of our students and staff means implementing robust health and safety policies, risk assessments and suitable levels of supervision. This Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy forms one of a suite of EES policies, including Health and Safety, and they should all be read and considered in their totality. In other words, the health and safety of a young person needs to be considered along with specific child protection issues when considering the whole area of Safeguarding. **All associated policies are in the 'Policies Folder' which all staff must read and which is located in every staff room.**

Risk Assessments

Risk assessments are completed for every activity undertaken and are central to effective safeguarding of our students. The Centre Manager ensures that the correct risk assessment is given to relevant staff leading an activity. That staff member reads the risk assessment prior to departure or prior to starting the activity and signs a master sheet held by the Centre Manager stating that they have read and understood the potential risks involved in the activity and what to do should anything happen. Post activity, the staff member then signs the risk assessment, with any updates deemed necessary, and returns the sheet to the Centre Manager for filing. An EMERGENCY REACTION PLAN is given to every member of staff conducting an activity both on site and off site.

Incident reporting

Staff are reminded during inductions of the importance of recording incidents and 'near misses' and the correct procedure for doing so.

Ratios

Staff/adult to student ratios will be age appropriate and activity appropriate but will never be fewer than 1:16 for students aged 12 -17. Group leaders will never be made responsible for students who are not in their own group.

Road safety

All students, irrespective of age, are given appropriate training during inductions in the area of road safety, crossing roads safely, using pedestrian crossings and so on.

Supervision levels

Equinox Education Services Ltd (EES) – Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2024

Students are given guidance in inductions and handbooks as to levels of supervision and in particular curfew times and what they may and may not do in their spare time. Supervision notes are sent to the student's parents at home so that they are aware of what levels of supervision to expect for their son or daughter.

Missing students

Daily registers are kept for all lessons and activities. Social programme staff do classroom checks first thing in the morning to ensure all students are present. Missing students are reported to the Centre Manager who then follows this up with the group leader or with the Accommodation Office who will then contact the host family.

Fire safety

All Staff are made aware of the Fire Assembly points and the procedures . Regular Fire drills are carried out .

First aid and medical

EES full time staff are all trained in the area of first aid. Group leaders will have the consent of parents to give their permission for medical staff intervene as required . With regards to individual students that attend programs without leaders parents will sign the EES individual application form which also give consent .

Discipline and boundaries

Curfew times are set and communicated to host families and students via handbooks, supervision notes (examples below) and terms and conditions.

Airport transfers

For all students under 18 travelling independently, we recommend either to the agent or to the parent that they have assisted check in and travel as an unaccompanied minor. All Equinox Education Services Staff that provide airport transfers are Garda Vetted , First Aid Trained and Child Protection trained .

12 Welfare

Named person

Our Designated Safeguarding Persons are also our Welfare Officers and they are named as such on notices throughout the school. Of course, all staff have a responsibility to ensure a good level of welfare support for all students. In the adult school we have specific activities for under 18s in addition to a weekly meeting where welfare issues may be discussed. This meeting is compulsory and registers are taken.

Activities

Activities will be age appropriate. In sporting activities students of roughly similar ages will be put together.

Signs

There will be signs prominently displayed in all centres showing who to go to for a welfare or safeguarding issue.

13 Transfers policy for individual students under the age of 18

This policy is sent to parents of students under the age of 18 who do not wish to use EES arranged transportation on arrival or departure

Equinox Education Services Ltd has a strict policy regarding transfers for individual students under the age of 18 from any port of entry in the IRELAND to the school and or host family. Normally we would expect any student under the age of 18 to come to the school and/or host family via transportation booked and arranged by Equinox Education Services . Parents of students may decide to make their own arrangements but only if the following conditions are strictly followed. The parent must:

- provide Equinox Education Services Ltd with the name, address and phone number of the person meeting and delivering the student to the school and/or host family as soon as possible and preferably with the enrolment;
- provide Equinox Education Services Ltd with a signed letter or consent form agreeing to such a transfer and giving Equinox Education Services Ltd the details (flight number, arrival time, etc);
- agree to Equinox Education Services Ltd contacting the person doing the transfer to verify the details of the transfer;
- agree to pass Equinox Education Services Ltd emergency contact details to the student and the person collecting the student;
- ensure that the student carries with him or her a letter from Equinox Education Services Ltd on Equinox Education Services Ltd headed paper letter stating that this student is not being met by the school but by a family friend or relative and to give their phone number;
- ensure that the student also carries a copy of the EES form 'Parental consent for a relative or family friend to provide a transfer for a student under the age of 18 to the school or host family';
- return the completed consent form. By completing and signing the consent form the parent agrees to the above conditions.

14 Supervision of students under the age of 18










For your information, the following tells you what we tell the parents of our students who are under the age of 18.

Supervision notes for parents of group students aged under 18 studying on out of summer group programmes (Stage Groups) and summer group programmes

In the IRELAND anyone under the age of 18 is considered a child in the eyes of the law. As such, we have an extra care of duty towards this group of students to ensure that their welfare needs are properly met and that they have a safe and secure time with us here at EES.

- 1 We hold specific inductions for young learners. This induction covers
 - Laws relating to smoking/alcohol/drugs
 - What to do if they have a problem/who to call/how to call emergency services
 - What to do if they are arrested
 - Curfew times
 - How to deal with aggressive behaviour on the street
 - Importance of queuing /saying please / thanks you/ speaking quietly if in buses etc
 - Importance of speaking to us if they have a problem
- 2 We have appropriate numbers of staff trained in first aid
- 3 We have strict curfew times and rules for students under the age of 18. These curfew times are given out and explained during orientation .

HELPFUL ADVICE IN HOMESTAY ACCOMMODATION

	<u>GIVE YOUR MOBILE NUMBER TO YOUR HOMESTAY HOST</u>
	Always keep your EES contact details
	Ask about laundry/clothes washing arrangements
	In IRELAND we flush toilet paper down the lavatory and do not have separate bins. Sanitary towels should be disposed of separately
	If you are ill and cannot come to lessons, you must contact your group leader or ask your host to ring the school as soon as possible.
	Always switch off lights and heaters when you leave a room
	Showers should be limited to five minutes. Host families may also ask that you shower at certain times and not leave it until late in the evening.
	You should be home for all evening meals or let your host know well in advance if you will not be home for dinner. This means you must go home directly after your group activities.
	You should not use the kitchen without permission, nor help yourself to food and drink

	Keep your room tidy in your homestay
	No take away food in bedrooms or in your host's house without their permission
	Do not lose your key if you are given one - IF YOU DO, YOU WILL HAVE TO PAY FOR ANY COSTS
	Keep valuable items locked in your suitcase – EES WILL NOT ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR LOST OR STOLEN ITEMS
	Do not make noise – especially after you go to bed or when you come in during the evening
	If you would like to invite your friends over, please ask your host first if this would be okay
	Never speak to strangers and never accept lifts from them or go anywhere with them. Go everywhere with a friend if you can.
	Do not carry a lot of money or and do not show expensive items in public.
	NO FIGHTING OR BULLYING ANYWHERE OR AT ANYTIME
	No smoking is allowed anywhere or at any time for students under the age of 16.
	No alcohol is allowed anywhere or at any time. Illegal drug use will not be accepted.
	Do not steal or shop lift.
	You must be home for all evening meals or let your host know well in advance if you will not be home for dinner. This means you must go home directly after your group activities.
	Do not play with fire alarms or fire extinguishers – IF YOU DO, YOU WILL HAVE TO PAY FOR ANY COSTS
	Do not damage school or homestay property - IF YOU DO, YOU WILL HAVE TO PAY FOR ANY COSTS
	Make sure you have the school emergency number (00 353 879975625) and your group leader's number. YOU MUST KEEP YOUR PHONE ON AND BE CONTACTABLE AT ALL TIMES WHEN YOU ARE NOT IN SCHOOL
	Go to every class on time
	Make sure all rubbish is disposed of in the school bins provided.

Bullying and abusive behaviour

We want to have a happy school, and bullying will not be accepted in any form (religious, cultural, race, gender, sexual orientation). If you bully someone this is very serious and we may send you home.

We welcome students from all backgrounds and will not allow discrimination by students or staff on the grounds of religion, gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity.

If you feel that somebody is bullying you, please do the following:

- If you think somebody is bullying you, tell your group leader, your teacher, the Director of Studies, Centre Manager

Remember, we are here to help and we want you to be happy with us. If something or someone is bothering you, **please tell us**



What time do I have to be home?

Age	Time
If you are aged 12 to 17	You must obtain your group leader's permission and group leader must accompany their students All under 18s you must be home by 21:00

Free time

- You may have free time in the evenings and on Sundays.
- You must follow the times when you have to be home in the evenings
- You may not leave the area (except with your group leader if you have one or with your host)
- You must go home for your evening meal immediately after school or activities have finished
- You must be contactable at all times you are not in school (i.e. during your free time) **AND YOUR PHONE MUST BE KEPT ON**
- You are not allowed to go anywhere out of Carlow on your own at weekends or in the evening.
- In your free time you are not allowed to go to town centre on your own.
- You must never be out alone
- You must always be with your group

4 **Please note that the full EES Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy is available on our website: <http://www.equinoxlearnabroad.com/policyandguidelines>**

Student Code of Conduct

This is the Code of Conduct for Juniors

Everyone at EES is important. No-one is more or less important than other people. Students, staff, and homestay hosts should all feel comfortable, safe, important and respected. We need your help to make sure this happens – **and we expect your help.**

We ask you to agree to these things:

- **All students must accept and respect different beliefs and cultures.**
- Be honest, polite and respectful to other people (students, staff and hosts).
- We will never accept abusive or violent behaviour, including sexual, racial, or religious. We will dismiss any student who does not follow this rule.
- Please look after school property (= our computers, tables, chairs, carpets, DVDs, etc.).
- Please look after your hosts' property.
- Be safe. Take care for the safety of other people.
- Only use the school computers for your studies. Please do not use illegal (bad) websites.
- Switch off your mobile phone during lessons
- Follow school rules and British laws and customs.