The Department of Education and Skills (DES) have published on its website the above document and the accompanying circular 0081/2017. The procedures come into effect immediately.

**What are the key measures?**

1. A statutory requirement that schools keep pupils safe from harm
2. Schools must produce a Child Safeguarding Statement, to include a risk assessment, by 11 March 2018
3. Every registered teacher, as a Mandated Person, now has a statutory obligation to report child protection concerns over a defined threshold to the Child and Family Agency (Tusla). Such reports are referred to as mandated reports
4. A requirement on mandated persons to assist Tusla in the assessment of child protection risk, if so requested.

**What is a ‘mandated person’?**

Where a registered teacher receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused or neglected, or is at risk of being abused or neglected, in addition to reporting the matter to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) in that school, he or she must also consider whether it is necessary for him or her (i.e. the teacher) to make a mandated report to Tusla in respect of that concern.

**What are the two main statutory obligations of mandated persons?**

1. To report to Tusla any knowledge, belief or reasonable grounds to suspect that a child:

* Has been harmed
* Is being harmed, or
* Is at risk of being harmed, and
* To report any disclosures made by a child in relation to the above.

1. To assist Tusla, if requested under the Act, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report.

**What is the defined ‘Threshold of Harm’ in relation to a child?**

1. Assault, ill-treatment or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects or is likely to seriously affect the child’s health, development, or welfare, or
2. Sexual abuse of the child.

**Principal’s Report to the Board of Management (BOM)**

In reporting to the BOM at each meeting, the principal shall include a Child Protection Oversight Report and will reference the following:

1. Allegations of abuse made against members of school staff
2. Child protection concerns not involving school staff
3. Child protection concerns arising from alleged bullying behaviour amongst pupils
4. Summary data in respect of reporting

**Training/In-Service**

Tusla has a (universal) online module which is accessible from its website. The Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) are providing some face to face in-service for DLPs and Deputy DLPs only and not for teachers. 900 schools can avail of a full day’s training between January and 11 March. The remainder of schools should be accommodated in the early part of the new school year. PDST hope to release an online module in February 2018, which will be tailored for schools. Schools will be permitted to close for two half-days to allow time to engage with procedures and to access online support modules.

IPPN will support school leaders in helping to embed the new procedures and encourages them to view and engage with the material as published on its website. IPPN will publish a Resource Bundle on the topic of Child Protection early in the New Year. It will reflect the implications of the full commencement of the Children First Act 2015, the Children First Guidelines 2017, changes to the DES Child Protection Procedures and the new DES Circular.