

O'Brien, Honor, 2000, *The effectiveness of Child protection Policies in Catholic Secondary Schools in Cork.*

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

'To prevent cruelty to children in every nation — whether cruelty occurs in the form of abuse, neglect or exploitation — and thus enable the children of the world to develop physically, mentally and socially in a healthy and normal manner'.

This is the vision for child protection as described by Dr. Kempe in 1977. He contributed much to the increased awareness of child protection by professionals. In recent years in Ireland there has been much discussion about child abuse and neglect and the need for child protection. Child protection social work has been expanding at a significant pace over the past decade, particularly since the implementation of the 1991 Child Care Act and the emergence of a number of child abuse 'scandals'.

Everyone has a duty to protect children, in fact it is a guiding principle of law and child protection procedures that the protection and welfare of the child must always be the first priority. Schools exist to respond to the developmental needs of children. How are Catholic schools in Cork responding? This writer suggests that their response must be pro-active. The trustees of the Catholic schools have prepared guidelines for the development of child protection policies in their respective schools. These policies should be influenced by the vision for Catholic education and it is suggested that they are most effective if there is a supportive ethos, a well organised pastoral care system in the school and a holistic approach to curriculum.

Child protection is the responsibility of all the adults in the school community and they need to be trained to do this effectively. For example they need to be trained to observe and monitor children for signs of abuse. They need to know the procedures for dealing with allegations or suspicions