An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Child Protection and Safeguarding Initial Inspection Report

INITIAL REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Edmund Rice Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Mount St. Nicholas Carrick-On-Suir Co. Tipperary
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	65270U
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	01/10/2024
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	19/03/2025

What is a child protection and safeguarding inspection?

A Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspection (CPSI) is a focused inspection of the implementation of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools (revised 2023)*. These procedures provide direction and guidance to school authorities and to school personnel in relation to meeting their statutory obligations under the Children First Act 2015. They also provide direction and guidance in relation to the continued implementation of the best practice, non-statutory guidance set out in Children First National Guidance 2017. The CPSI inspection model examines the implementation of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools (revised 2023)* in schools through conducting ten checks based on the procedures.

The CPSI inspection process consists of two inspections: an **Initial Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspection** and a **Final Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspection**. The two inspections are typically carried out in a school within a relatively short timeframe. This is a report on an Initial Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspection.

What happens during an initial child protection and safeguarding inspection?

During an initial CPSI, inspectors:

- Engage with learners about their learning in Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)
- Invite all parents to complete an online parent survey that explores issues relevant to school climate and parents' awareness of the school's child protection procedures, including the school's anti-bullying procedures
- Hold meetings with:
    - Designated Liaison Person (DLP) / Deputy DLP
    - Chairperson of board of management
    - A sample of school personnel
    - The SPHE coordinator
- Review the following documents:
    - Board of management minutes
    - Child safeguarding statement and risk assessment
    - Relevant school plans
    - The school's IT Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)
- Review child protection records, where these have been created.

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

How to read this report

The checks conducted during this inspection are based on the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023).*

The first section of the report indicates the extent to which the school was compliant with each of the checks conducted by indicating, in respect of each of the stated checks, whether the school was:

- Fully compliant
- Substantially compliant
- Partially compliant
- Not compliant

Some of the checks may not be relevant to a particular school, for example a school that has never had a concern in relation to child protection will not have any child protection records. In such cases, the report indicates that the check does not apply to the school by stating *Not Applicable* after that particular check.

It should be noted that the term 'school personnel' as referred to in this inspection report is used as a generic term to cover all adults who are involved in the operation of the school. It covers employees and voluntary workers and includes parent association members when they are working in the school. These personnel include, for example, teachers, special needs assistants, caretakers, secretaries, cleaners, voluntary workers in the school, paid or voluntary tutors, and parent association members helping with aspects of the work of the school.

Where a school is less than fully compliant with a particular requirement, the report provides some additional evaluative comment on the check. It also advises actions that the school should take in order to comply more fully with the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023)*.

The report also provides an evaluative comment on the school's planning for and implementation of the Social Personal and Health Education curriculum and the Stay Safe programme / Relationships and Sexuality Education programme as evident during the inspection. In providing this overview, reference is made to the appropriate quality level of the Inspectorate's Quality Continuum:

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Requires improvement to achieve a good standard
- Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard

A *Guide to Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections* was published on the website of the Department of Education in January 2019 and can be accessed at www.gov.ie. This Guide details how CPSIs are carried out and also provides the framework used by inspectors in arriving at judgements about a school's compliance with the aspects of the *Child Protection Procedures (revised 2023)* that are checked during the inspection.

Child protection and safeguarding inspection report

The checks detailed below derive from the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023)*. These procedures are designed to ensure that schools provide a safe and secure environment for all our children and through appropriate curriculum provision, provide for the incremental development of the life skills that will empower students to keep themselves safe.

In order to meet these aims, the procedures set out a number of requirements on schools relating to communicating with members of the school community about child protection matters; training of school personnel and board members in respect of child protection; reporting about child protection to the board of management; and fulfilling certain reporting and record keeping obligations in relation to child protection matters. They also detail the mandatory aspects of the curriculum that are designed to develop students' knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours through Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme.

Responsibility for ensuring the school is fully compliant with these checks rests with the board of management. The Inspectorate will monitor the board's progress in achieving full compliance.

Aspects of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023)* checked	**Fully Compliant Substantially Compliant Partially Compliant Not compliant Not applicable**
1. The school had communicated the required aspects of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023)* to relevant stakeholders.	**Fully Compliant**
2. A Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and a deputy DLP have been appointed in line with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023)*.	**Fully Compliant**
3. The board of management reported that it is aware of and discharges its responsibilities to provide information to all school personnel relevant to child protection and to ensure that available training is undertaken by all or some members of staff as required.	**Substantially Compliant**
• ***Additional Information:*** The board of management had arrangements in place to ensure that all school personnel were given opportunities to develop the necessary familiarity with the procedures to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities. Most, but not all, school personnel demonstrated sufficient awareness of the actions to take if they had a child protection concern. • ***Action Advised*****:** The board should review the training it provides to staff, ensuring that all staff are aware of the correct actions to take in relation to child protection concerns.	
4. The board of management reported that it is aware of its responsibilities in relation to vetting of all school personnel and report that they discharge these responsibilities.	**Fully Compliant**
5. A child safeguarding statement and risk assessment have been prepared in line with the template and requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023).*	**Fully Compliant**
6. The minutes of the board meetings that were checked contained a record of a child protection oversight report being provided in line with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023)*.	**Fully Compliant**

7. Correct record keeping procedures were found in the child protection cases examined.	**Substantially Compliant**
• ***Additional Information:*** A secure location had been identified for any files relevant to child protection. The DDLP was aware of this location and could access it if required. A hardcopy file was not available for all child protection concerns. • ***Action Advised*****:** A child protection file should be created for all child protection concerns. This file should contain records of the concern and all relevant correspondence. The board is advised that optional templates A and B and guidance notes 2 and 3, available on gov.ie, are useful supports in the preparation of these files.	
8. The procedures to report child protection concerns were fully implemented in the records examined.	**Not Compliant**
• ***Additional Information:*** In instances where a concern had been brought to the attention of the DLP and advice had been sought from Tusla, resulting in no report being submitted to Tusla, no child protection file had been created. No records were available informing the registered teacher that advice was sought or the nature of the advice given. There were no records of a clear statement being provided to the relevant staff member as to why the concern was not being reported to Tusla, with advice that he/she may still report that concern to Tusla. • ***Action Advised*****:** The DLP should ensure that a child protection file, containing a written record of how the concern came to the DLP's attention, is opened for each child protection concern. The board should ensure that the procedures to report child protection concerns, outlined above, are fully implemented.	
9. The procedures to report allegations or suspicions of abuse against school personnel were fully implemented in the records examined. *(These personnel include, for example, teachers, special needs assistants, caretakers, secretaries, cleaners, voluntary workers in the school, paid or voluntary tutors, and parent association members helping with aspects of the work of the school.)*	**Not Applicable**

10. Curriculum Check	
There was a Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme for all students in Junior Cycle.	**Yes**
There was a Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme for all students in the school.	**Yes**
The overall quality of planning for and implementation of the SPHE curriculum and the RSE programme was good. There was very good provision on the school timetable for junior cycle, with two lessons of SPHE and one lesson of Wellbeing per week for each year group. RSE at senior cycle was taught during religion lessons and provision here was also very good. Students in transition year had a six-week RSE programme, while students in fifth year and in sixth year had one lesson of RSE per week throughout the year. There was a defined SPHE team in junior cycle, including a teacher with experience in the delivery of the subject. The team worked collaboratively, sharing resources, ideas and experiences. There were a number of teachers of RSE in senior cycle, and both teams had accessed a range of professional learning experiences. Planning for SPHE in junior cycle was informed by the new NCCA short course specification and planning for RSE at senior cycle was also comprehensive. Both plans incorporated relevant topics for each year	

group. This was reflected in discussions during the student focus group meetings held as part of the evaluation, where students generally displayed good knowledge of key areas of the curriculum.

The RSE and SPHE teams displayed the capacity to appropriately adjust their planning in the context of student needs and readiness for particular topics. Surveys of senior cycle students regarding their experiences of RSE had been undertaken in the past and remained an important element in the RSE team's approach to the teaching of the subject. This positive approach could be further developed through the use of student focus groups to identify aspects that are working well and areas for improvement.

Overall, parent responses to a questionnaire distributed as part of the evaluation, indicated satisfaction with the school's care for students and a high level of awareness of its curricular provision for SPHE and RSE.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The board of management wishes to acknowledge this 'Initial Report'. The board are very satisfied that our school is 'Fully Compliant' in the vast majority of areas inspected and are already underway in moving one area of substantial compliance to full. The report is an accurate reflection of the current status of the ERSS child protection and safeguarding policies. The board welcomes the validation of their procedures. The board of management appreciates the positive commentary in relation to the provision of RSE and SPHE in our school, while also welcoming the advice given on ways to improve.

Our school community is proud to be student-centered and the board gratefully received the positive feedback from our parental surveys where it was indicated that a very good school atmosphere exists. They also indicated that they have a strong awareness of their child's learning in RSE.

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

A copy of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (2023)* was made available to all staff. All staff were briefed on the importance of being familiar with the required correct procedure for mandated and non-mandated persons when reporting a concern to the DLP and DDLP.

Files were retrospectively created for 2 cases where TUSLA advice was sought but no action was recommended. The Board has approved the action taken, and in future, a case file will be opened in such circumstances.