An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Child Protection and Safeguarding Initial Inspection Report

INITIAL REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	St Joseph's Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Rochfortbridge Co. Westmeath
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	63310T
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	20/02/2024
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	18/09/2024

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 conduction 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.

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

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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.

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.	Fully Compliant
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:*** Hardcopy files were available for all child protection concerns and these were kept in a secure location which can be accessed by the deputy DLP if necessary. A number of the files reviewed did not contain all correspondence relevant to the concern. Unique identifier numbers were not evident in all of the files.	

• ***Action Advised***: All files should contain all required records. Unique identifier numbers should be included in each child protection file.	
8. The procedures to report child protection concerns were fully implemented in the records examined.	Substantially Compliant
• ***Additional Information:*** All files examined indicated that a report was made to Tusla in respect of each case. Complete records that demonstrate the full implementation of the procedures to report child protection concerns were not available in a number of the records examined. The missing records included correspondence relating to providing information to persons who raised a concern about the actions taken in relation to the concern. • ***Action Advised:*** All child protection files should contain all required correspondence. Where a registered teacher raises a child protection concern a record should be maintained of the correspondence where by the teacher is informed of the action taken in relation to the concern. The school may find the optional templates and guidance notes available on the gov.ie website useful in completing these actions.	
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 very good. A review of SPHE and RSE planning documents and of school timetable information indicated that the school had planned appropriately for the implementation of the SPHE curriculum and the RSE programme. The school had appointed a co-ordinator for SPHE and two teachers at senior cycle to teach RSE. However, there is a large team of seventeen teachers teaching junior cycle SPHE. The school should refine this approach and should develop a dedicated core team for SPHE/RSE and should formalise opportunities for the team to meet. Students who met with the inspectors during the inspection demonstrated a very good understanding of a number of key topics of SPHE and RSE such as wellbeing, bullying, internet safety awareness, equality and diversity. The students had valuable insights and perspectives about how provision for RSE and SPHE, as well as the overall student experience in the school, might be further enhanced to meet their needs. Student voice, if captured, would support further meaningful development of the SPHE curriculum and the RSE programme.	