An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige
Department of Education
and Youth

A Guide to Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections

Inspectorate | September 2025

Introduction

Ensuring that children enjoy a safe and secure learning environment in schools and education settings is a key priority for everyone who supports the development of children. There is a strong culture of child protection and safeguarding in our schools, and they take these responsibilities very seriously. The Department of Education and Youth recognises that child protection is a shared responsibility among parents, school personnel, school leaders, school management and patrons, and other agencies and departments that support schools.

This guide sets out how the Department conducts Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections in Irish primary and post-primary schools, centres for education[1] and other learning settings. These inspections focus on compliance with key aspects of the *Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025* (the updated procedures). The engagement of children and young people, and their parents are integral to this inspection model.

The board of management shall adopt the updated procedures no later than their last meeting prior to 31 December 2026. Schools may adopt the updated procedures at any point prior to this date. Upon adoption, the board must use the latest templates provided by the Department for the Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment, and review. Until a school adopts the updated procedures, the Department will conduct Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections under the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023).*

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)* or the *Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025.* 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 procedures through undertaking six checks.

Key features

- A CPSI consists of a **single-day inspection** by two inspectors, with **follow-up activity** by the reporting inspector where full compliance was not achieved. The follow-up activity is carried out in a relatively short timeframe.
- Two days' notice is typically provided for a Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspection. **Notification** is by phone call to the principal followed by an email outlining the details. The Inspectorate also conducts unannounced Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections in a sample of schools.
- **Two surveys** are administered as part of these inspections. These surveys seek to elicit the views of parents and pupils/students about culture and safeguarding measures in the school.

[1] Throughout this guide, the term 'school' is used to refer to schools, centres for education and other learning settings. The term 'principal' includes centre coordinators.

- The inspectors will conduct **meetings** with the Designated Liaison Person (DLP), the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLP), the chairperson of the board of management, and a selection of school personnel.
- The inspectors will **review documentation**. This includes the school's child safeguarding statement and risk assessment, annual review documents, notifications and communication to school personnel, parents, parents' association and the patron. In addition, they will review minutes of board of management meetings, including Child Protection Oversight Reports, and a sample of child protection case files.
- The Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspection will conclude with a **feedback meeting** between the inspectors, the principal and the DDLP. While the role of the DLP and the principal are separate, it is expected that the DLP will be the principal. The DLP will be invited to attend this meeting in schools where they are not the principal. At this meeting the inspectors will discuss the findings of the inspection and afford the school an opportunity to respond to those findings.
- Shortly after the inspection the school will receive the **results of both surveys** and will receive a phone call from the reporting inspector to discuss them.
- A **draft inspection report** will follow to affirm the school's compliance or to support the school in becoming compliant by outlining the actions to be taken.
- **One report**, stating the level of compliance of the school on the day of the inspection, and the follow up activity (if required), will issue to the school and be published on the gov.ie website.

Note

- Inspectors do not remove files, records or other documents from the school; they do not make a copy of any part of a file or record; and no personal data relating to any person referred to in a file is recorded by the inspectors.
- The general framework of child protection legislation, with the duties and obligations it imposes, and the pre-existing statutory functions of the Inspectorate under sections 7(b) and 13(8) of the Education Act 1998 provide the legal basis for inspectors to access and review individual child protection case files.
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections in Boarding Facilities associated with Recognised Schools (CPSIBF) are typically conducted in conjunction with a CPSI in the recognised school associated with the boarding facility. They include inspection of the school's boarding facilities, the management of those boarding facilities and the arrangements in those facilities to ensure compliance with the relevant procedures.

Outline of inspection activities

- The overview and infographics on the following pages give an outline of the inspection activities which take place during a CPSI.

Overview of Inspection Activities (CPSI)

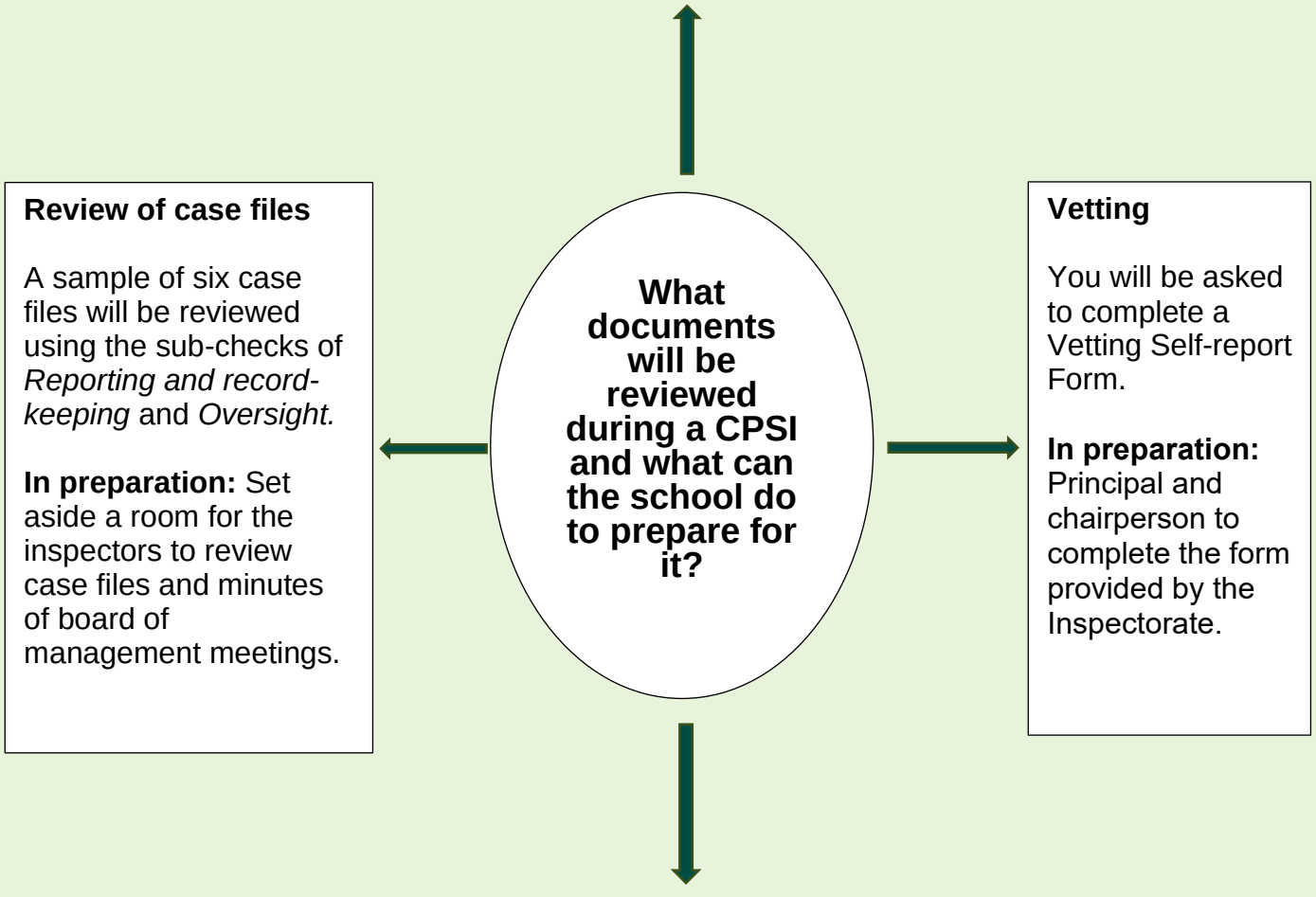
BEFORE THE INSPECTION VISIT	Inspectorate Activity	• Provide two days' notice of the inspection by phone call. • Send email to the school outlining the details of the inspection. • Outline the documents required for the inspection and the meetings held during the inspection. • Forward the Vetting Self-Report Form, Contact Details Form and Teachers' Script to the school. • Provide details of the arrangements for administering the surveys of the parents and of the pupils/students.
	School Activity	• Complete and sign the Vetting Self-Report Form. • Share the link to the surveys, provided by the Inspectorate, and the explanatory note with all parents as soon as possible following notification of the inspection. • Facilitate teachers to administer the pupil/student surveys in their classes (third to sixth classes in primary and all class levels in post-primary). • Ensure that all necessary documents are available for the inspection. • Make the necessary arrangements for the meetings.
DURING THE INSPECTION VISIT	Inspectorate Activity	Request list of school personnel from the principal to select a sample of ten for interview.
		Review: • Child protection case files • Child safeguarding statement including the risk assessment • Annual review documents of the child safeguarding statement • Notifications to parents, parents' association and the patron • The three most recent minutes of board meetings and minutes relating to case files, if relevant • The completed Vetting Self-report Form
		Hold meetings with: • A sample of school personnel • The DLP and DDLP • The chairperson of the board of management
		Provide oral feedback to the principal and DDLP. While the role of the DLP and the principal are separate, it is expected that the DLP will be the principal. The DLP will be invited to attend this meeting in schools where they are not the principal.
	School Activity	Principal makes available all child protection case files, documents, notifications and minutes of board meetings, and arranges meetings.
AFTER THE INSPECTION VISIT	Inspectorate Activity	• Issue interim advice note, if not compliant on all checks • Forward data from both surveys to the school • Phone call to school to discuss survey findings and narrative section of the report • Conduct follow-up activity, if necessary • Issue draft report for factual verification/school response • Publication of the report on the gov.ie website
	School Activity	• Implement the action required, if applicable • Analyse and share survey data • Receive the draft report • Respond at factual verification/school response stage.

Documents to be reviewed during a CPSI

Review of child safeguarding statement and minutes of board meetings

Child safeguarding statement including the risk assessment, annual review documents, notifications and communication to school personnel, parents, parents' association and the patron, minutes of board of management meetings, including CPORs. Please see the sub-checks of the six areas, in the table at the end of this section, for more details.

In preparation: Provide the child safeguarding statement and associated review documents. Provide evidence of communication to school personnel, parents, parents' association and the patron. Provide minutes of board of management meetings (typically, the three most recent minutes of board meetings and possibly access to other board minutes following the review of case files).



Review of case files

A sample of six case files will be reviewed using the sub-checks of *Reporting and record-keeping* and *Oversight.*

In preparation: Set aside a room for the inspectors to review case files and minutes of board of management meetings.

Vetting

You will be asked to complete a Vetting Self-report Form.

In preparation: Principal and chairperson to complete the form provided by the Inspectorate.

Review of survey data

Parent and pupil/student survey data

In preparation: Share the link to the surveys, provided by the Inspectorate, and the explanatory note with all parents as soon as possible following notification of the inspection.

Facilitate teachers to administer the pupil/student surveys in their classes (third to sixth classes in primary and all class levels in post-primary).

Interviews to be conducted during a CPSI

What interviews will take place during a CPSI and what can the school do to prepare for it?

Interview with personnel (Sample of ten)
In our interviews with the members of school personnel our discussion will include:

- Child protection training which the school has provided or facilitated
- How they and the school have, or would, deal with child protection concerns and their expectations around the reporting process
- What they would do if they had a child protection concern about the DLP

In preparation: Inform all school personnel that they may be selected for a brief interview with an inspector, based on the areas listed above. Share the infographics on pages 57 and 60 of the procedures. Encourage all school personnel to bring any supporting documentation they require to the interview. Arrange for the members of school personnel to be available for this interview (10 minutes per interview).

Interview with DLP and DDLP

Explore the six areas of Policy development and review, Communication, Training, Reporting and record-keeping, Oversight, Vetting.

In preparation: Set aside a room for a meeting and arrange for the DLP and DDLP to be available for this interview (approximately 30 minutes).

Interview with chairperson of board of management

In our interview we will explore the six areas of Policy development and review, Communication, Training, Reporting and record-keeping, Oversight and Vetting.

In preparation: Following contact with the inspector, schedule a meeting between the chairperson and the inspectors, preferably during the school day. There is an option for face-to-face, virtual meeting or phone call, in consultation with the reporting inspector (approximately 30 minutes).

Reporting

The report will be published on the gov.ie website. The first section of the report indicates whether the school was compliant with each of the checks as follows:

- Compliant
- Not yet compliant
- Not applicable

Where a school does not have child protection case files, the report will indicate this, and the relevant check will not apply.

Where a school is *not yet compliant* with a particular requirement following the day of inspection, the inspector will issue an **interim advice note** setting out the actions required for the school to achieve compliance. The reporting inspector will engage with the school to support them, and subsequently conduct follow-up activity to complete the inspection process.

On completion of the inspection process, the **CPSI report** will issue, including the interim advice note. The school will have five working days to factually verify the report and point out any errors of fact, if any. Thereafter, the school will have ten working days in which to respond in writing to the report. The finalised report and the school's response will be published on the gov.ie website.

The school's response will be published in line with the *Guidelines for the Publication of Inspection Reports*. The school response stage is an important opportunity for the school to set out how it has addressed, or intends to address, any actions required in the report.

If the school is *compliant* on all checks, the report will issue for school response. The school will have ten working days in which to respond in writing to the report. The finalised report and the school's response will be published on the gov.ie website.

Following up where compliance has not been achieved

If the school has not achieved compliance in all six checks upon completion of the follow-up activity, the Inspectorate will continue to engage with the school until compliance is achieved.

The six checks

The checks detailed below derive from the procedures. These procedures are designed to ensure that schools provide a safe and secure environment for all our children. In order to meet these aims, the procedures set out requirements on schools relating to:

1. Policy development and review
2. Communication
3. Training
4. Reporting and record keeping
5. Oversight
6. Vetting

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.

Checks and sub-checks	
Check 1: Policy development and review	1 (a) The child safeguarding statement, including the risk assessment, was in the format currently published by the Department.
	1 (b) The child safeguarding statement, including the risk assessment, was reviewed annually, i.e. each calendar year.
	1 (c) A record of the review and its outcome has been retained by the board.
Check 2: Communication	2 (a) The child safeguarding statement, the student-friendly version of the statement, and the name of the DLP were prominently displayed near the main entrance.
	2 (b) The school has provided the Child Safeguarding Statement to all school personnel, the patron, the parents' association (or where none exists, directly to parents) and published it on the school website.
	2 (c) The school has informed school personnel that the review of the Child Safeguarding Statement has been undertaken. The school provided written notification that the review has been undertaken to the parents' association (or where none exists, directly to parents) and to the school patron. A copy of this notification was published on the school's website.
Check 3: Training	3 (a) The DLP has undertaken appropriate training to fulfil their role.
	3 (b) The deputy DLP has undertaken appropriate training to fulfil their role (in the absence of the DLP, in supporting the DLP and in keeping up to date with active cases).
	3 (c) All school personnel have attended appropriate child protection training to ensure they have the necessary familiarity with the procedures to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities.
	3 (d) All members of school personnel who were interviewed during the inspection were aware of who to go to if they had a child protection concern. In addition, they were aware of who to go to if the child protection concern related to the DLP.
	3 (e) All members of school personnel were aware of the actions to be taken by them and by the DLP if they had a child protection concern. They were aware of the actions relating to seeking advice, reporting or not reporting.
Check 4: Reporting and record keeping	4 (a) All child protection files were maintained in a secure location.
	4 (b) All files were assigned a case file number and, in cases which require oversight by the board, all relevant parties referenced in files were assigned a unique code or serial number.
	4 (c) A written record from the DLP of how the concern came to their attention was retained on the relevant file for all child protection concerns.
	4 (d) A copy of the report submitted to Tusla was available, where such a report was made.
	4 (e) A record that the DLP informed the parent/carer that a report was being made to Tusla, or a record of the decision made by the DLP not to inform the parent/carer and the reasons for not doing so was available for all concerns that were reported to Tusla.

	4 (f) A record of any consultation with Tusla, which includes the date, the name of the Tusla official and the advice given was available for all concerns where the advice of Tusla was sought and evidence that a report was submitted to Tusla where Tusla advised to do so.
	4 (g) A record that the member of school personnel was informed that advice was being sought, and the nature of the advice received from Tusla, where applicable.
	4 (h) A record of a clear statement in writing provided to the member of school personnel as to the reasons why their concern was not being reported and that they were advised that they may still report that concern to Tusla.
	4 (i) A record that, upon receiving a child protection concern from a parent **about their own child,** the DLP issued a written notification to them, setting out that the matter was reported to Tusla, or that they were advised by Tusla not to report the matter, or the DLP determined the matter did not warrant reporting and the reasons for this, and that it was open to the parent to contact Tusla directly on the matter.
	4 (j) Where redacted copies of documents were presented to the board for oversight, a single copy of these records was placed on the file. A signed note accounting for all copies of the redacted records was also placed on the file.
	4 (k) A record that the school employer was informed where an allegation was raised against a member of **school personnel**
	4 (l) A record that the school employer (chairperson of the BOM/CE of the ETB) sought advice from or made a report to Tusla **(if allegation made against DLP**)
	4 (m) A hardcopy file was available for all child protection concerns which contained original records which were not anonymised and, where applicable, a copy of the redacted records.
Check 5: Oversight	5 (a) The board was provided with a child protection and oversight report (CPOR) at each ordinary board meeting.
	5 (b) The child protection oversight report (CPOR) contained all the information required under the procedures.
	5 (c) Where there were child protection cases which required oversight by the board, redacted copies of all the documents specified in the procedures in respect of each such case were provided to the board.
	5 (d) The minutes of the board meeting referred to case file numbers and did not record the names of the individuals involved, where oversight of the case files was required.
Check 6: Vetting	6 (a) The chairperson and principal reported in writing that they discharge their responsibilities in relation to the vetting of all school personnel.

Clarification in relation to the provision of the Child Protection Oversight Report in Centres for Education (Youthreach Centres)

- In some cases, Youthreach centres will have a board of management. In these cases, the minutes of each meeting of this board should contain a Child Protection Oversight Report.

- In other cases, there may be one board with responsibility for a number of Youthreach centres. In these cases, the minutes of each meeting of that board should contain a Child Protection Oversight Report in respect of each Youthreach Centre under its responsibility.

- If there is no overall coordinator for the Youthreach centres, which may be the case in some smaller ETBs, the Adult Education Officer (AEO) has line management responsibility and provides the Child Protection oversight report to the Further Education and Training (FET) Director. These reports should be provided every three months and records of their provision should be maintained by the FET director and be made available to the inspector by the FET Director on request.

Resources available to schools

The Department has developed three booklets to support schools in their implementation of the *Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025.*

- **Child Protection Safeguarding Booklet**
- **Child Protection Case File Booklet**
- **Child Protection Oversight Booklet**

These booklets are on the child protection page of the gov.ie website here.

Contact

Schools may e-mail general queries in relation to the child protection procedures to the Department's dedicated e-mail address childprotection@education.gov.ie

Conclusion

This guide has been produced and issued in line with Section 13(8) of the *Education Act 1998.* The Inspectorate is committed to reviewing the operation of the Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspection model from time-to-time following consultation with the education partners.

Parent Survey

Child Protection and Safeguarding Survey

Please do not try to access this survey using Internet Explorer 11 (IE11).

For the best experience please use any of the following web browsers: Chrome, Edge or Firefox.

We would like to know how safe and supported you feel your child is in this school.

* Culture

	I agree	I'm not sure	I disagree
This school is a welcoming place	○	○	○
There are clear expectations about behaviour for everyone in this school	○	○	○
I believe that my child matters in this school	○	○	○
I am satisfied with the steps this school has taken to promote a positive school climate	○	○	○

* Safeguarding

	I agree	I'm not sure	I disagree
My child is safe and well looked after in this school	○	○	○
I am satisfied with the steps this school has taken to prevent bullying	○	○	○
I know who to approach in this school if I have a child protection or bullying concern	○	○	○
I am confident that if I have a child protection or bullying concern this school will act promptly and effectively	○	○	○

FINISH

Pupil/Student Survey

Child Protection and Safeguarding Survey

Please do not try to access this survey using Internet Explorer 11 (IE11).

For the best experience please use any of the following web browsers: Chrome, Edge or Firefox.

We would like to know how safe and supported you feel in this school. Some students will agree with these statements, some will disagree, and others won't know. Tell us how YOU feel.

* Culture

	I agree	I'm not sure	I disagree
There is at least one adult at my school who I can talk to if I need help or advice	○	○	○
My school expects that we do not hurt other people by what we say or do	○	○	○
I feel like my opinions are listened to and valued in my school	○	○	○

* Safeguarding

	I agree	I'm not sure	I disagree
The adults in my school help to stop bullying	○	○	○
I feel safe in my classroom	○	○	○
I feel safe in school toilets/toilet area	○	○	○
I feel safe in the school corridors and/or stairwells	○	○	○
I feel safe in the school yard	○	○	○
I feel safe arriving at my school and leaving my school	○	○	○

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