

# St. Columba's College Stranorlar



## Child Safeguarding Statement

February 2024

St. Columba's College is a post-primary school providing post-primary education to pupils from First Year to Leaving Certificate Year.

In accordance with the requirements of [Children First Act 2015](#), [Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017](#), [the Addendum to Children First \(2019\)](#), the [Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017](#) and [Tusla Guidance on the preparation of Child Safeguarding Statements](#), the Board of Management of St. Columba's College has agreed the Child Safeguarding Statement set out in this document.

1. The Board of Management has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017 as part of this overall Child Safeguarding Statement
2. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Mr. Tom Rowan, Principal
3. The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Ms. Georgina White, Deputy Principal
4. The Board of Management recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and must be reflected in all of the school's policies, procedures, practices and activities. In its policies, procedures, practices and activities, the school will adhere to the following principles of best practice in child protection and welfare:

The school will:

- recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations;
- fully comply with its statutory obligations under the Children First Act 2015 and other relevant legislation relating to the protection and welfare of children;
- fully co-operate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters;
- adopt safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect workers from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect;
- develop a practice of openness with parents and encourage parental involvement in the education of their children; and
- fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.

The school will also adhere to the above principles in relation to any adult pupil with a special vulnerability.

5. The following procedures/measures are in place:
  - In relation to any member of staff who is the subject of any investigation (howsoever described) in respect of any act, omission or circumstance in respect of a child attending the school, the school adheres to the relevant procedures set out in Chapter 7 of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 and to

the relevant agreed disciplinary procedures for school staff which are published on the DE website.

- In relation to the selection or recruitment of staff and their suitability to work with children, the school adheres to the statutory vetting requirements of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 and to the wider duty of care guidance set out in relevant Garda vetting and recruitment circulars published by the Department of Education and available on the DE website.
  - In relation to the provision of information and, where necessary, instruction and training, to staff in respect of the identification of the occurrence of harm (as defined in the 2015 Act) the school-
    - Has provided each member of staff with a copy of the school's Child Safeguarding Statement
    - Ensures all new staff are provided with a copy of the school's Child Safeguarding Statement
    - Encourages staff to avail of relevant training
    - Encourages Board of Management members to avail of relevant training
    - The Board of Management maintains records of all staff and Board member training
  - In relation to reporting of child protection concerns to Tusla, all school personnel are required to adhere to the procedures set out in the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017, including in the case of registered teachers, those in relation to mandated reporting under the Children First Act 2015
  - In this school the Board has appointed the above named DLP as the "relevant person" (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) to be the first point of contact in respect of the school's child safeguarding statement.
  - All registered teachers employed by the school are mandated persons under the Children First Act 2015.
  - In accordance with the Children First Act 2015 and the Addendum to Children First (2019), the Board has carried out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child while attending the school or participating in school activities. A written assessment setting out the areas of risk identified and the school's procedures for managing those risks is included with the Child Safeguarding Statement.
  - The various procedures referred to in this Statement can be accessed via the school's website, the DE website or will be made available on request by the school.
6. This statement has been published on the school's website and has been provided to all members of school personnel, the Parents' Council and the patron. It is readily accessible to parents and guardians on request. A copy of this Statement will be made available to Tusla and the Department if requested.
7. This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed annually or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this statement refers.

This Child Safeguarding Statement was reviewed and adopted by the Board of Management on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

Signed: P. J. McGowan

Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 8/2/24

Signed: [Signature]

Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 8/2/2024.

## Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment

### Written Assessment of Risk of St. Columba's College

In accordance with section 11 of the Children First Act 2015 and with the requirements of Chapter 8 of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017*, the following is the Written Risk Assessment of St. Columba's College.

#### 1. List of school activities

- Daily arrival and dismissal of pupils
- Recreation breaks for pupils
- Classroom teaching
- One-to-one teaching
- One-to-one learning support
- One-to-one counselling
- One-to-one meetings in principal/deputy principal's offices
- One-to-one preparation for oral examinations in language subjects
- Games/reading clubs at lunch/break time
- Outdoor teaching activities
- Online teaching and learning remotely
- Sporting Activities
- School outings
- School trips involving overnight stay
- School trips involving foreign travel
- Use of toilet/changing/shower areas in schools
- Use of swimming pool, changing and shower area in external sport facilities
- Sports Day – Pentathlon for 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Years
- Fundraising events involving pupils
- Use of off-site facilities for school activities (including Scoil Mhuire)
- School transport arrangements including use of bus escorts
- Care of children with special educational needs, including intimate care where needed
- Care of any vulnerable adult students, including intimate care where needed
- Management of challenging behaviour amongst pupils, including appropriate use of restraint where required
- Management of provision of food and drink
- Administration of Medicine
- Administration of First Aid
- Curricular provision in respect of SPHE, RSE and Wellbeing Progra
- Prevention and dealing with bullying amongst pupils
- Training of school personnel in child protection matters
- Use of external personnel to supplement curriculum
- Use of external personnel to support sports and other extra-curricular activities
- Care of pupils with specific vulnerabilities/ needs such as
  - Pupils from ethnic minorities/migrants
  - Members of the Traveller community
  - LGBTQi children
  - Pupils perceived to be LGBT
  - Pupils of minority religious faiths
  - Children in care

- Children on CPNS
- Children with medical needs
- Recruitment of school personnel including -
  - Teachers/SNA's
  - Caretaker/Secretary/Cleaners
  - Sports coaches
  - External Tutors/Guest Speakers
  - Volunteers/Parents in school activities
  - Visitors/contractors present in school during school hours
  - Visitors/contractors present during after school activities
- Participation by pupils in religious ceremonies/religious instruction external to the school
- Use of Information and Communication Technology by pupils in school, including social media
- Application of sanctions under the school's Code of Behaviour including detention of pupils, confiscation of phones etc.
- Students participating in work experience in the school
- Students from the school participating in work experience elsewhere
- Student teachers undertaking training placement in school
- Use of video/photography/other media to record school events
- After school use of school premises by other organisations
- Breakfast club
- Evening study

## **2. The school has identified the following risk of harm in respect of its activities -**

- Risk of harm not being recognised by school personnel
- Risk of harm not being reported properly and promptly by school personnel
- Risk of child being harmed in the school by a member of school personnel
- Risk of child being harmed in the school by another child
- Risk of child being harmed in the school by volunteer or visitor to the college and Scoil Mhuire
- Risk of child being harmed by a member of school personnel, a member of staff of another organisation or other person while child participating in out of school activities e.g. school educational trips, quizzes, debates
- Risk of child being harmed by a member of school personnel, a member of staff of another organisation or other person while child participating in out of school sports activities such as soccer, gaelic, hurling, camogie, rugby, tennis, golf and athletics
- Risk of child being harmed by a member of school personnel, a member of staff of another organisation or other person while child participating in swimming lessons and use of changing/showering/toilet facilities in external venues
- Risk of harm due to bullying of child
- Risk of harm due to inadequate implementation of Anti Bullying Policy and procedures
- Risk of harm due to inadequate supervision of children in school – breakfast club, morning break, lunchtime, during 'free' classes, during timetabled classes, changing rooms and toilet areas

- Risk of harm due to inappropriate relationship/communications between child and another child or adult
- Risk of harm due to children inappropriately accessing/using computers, social media, phones and other devices while at school
- Risk of harm caused by member of school personnel/visitors accessing/circulating inappropriate material via social media, texting, digital device or other manner
- Risk of harm to children with SEN who have particular vulnerabilities
- Risk of harm to child while a child is receiving intimate care
- Risk of harm due to inadequate Code of Behaviour
- Risk of harm in one-to-one teaching, counselling, coaching situation
- Risk of harm caused by member of school personnel communicating with pupils in appropriate manner via social media, texting, digital device, in a remote learning environment or any other manner

**3. The school has the following procedures in place to address the risks of harm identified in this assessment -**

- The *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017* are made available to all school personnel
- School Personnel are required to adhere to the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017* and all registered teaching staff are required to adhere to the *Children First Act 2015*
- The school implements in full the SPHE/RSE curriculum
- The school implements in full the Wellbeing Programme at Junior Cycle
- The school has an Anti-Bullying Policy which fully adheres to the requirements of the Department's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*
- The school has a school supervision policy to ensure appropriate supervision of children during arrival/departure, assembly, dismissal and breaks and in respect of specific areas such as toilets and changing rooms
- The school has a school supervision policy to ensure appropriate supervision of children while swimming and using shower/toilet/changing facilities in external venues
- The school has in place a policy and clear procedures in respect of school tours and outings
- The school has a Health and Safety policy
- The school adheres to the requirements of the Garda vetting legislation and relevant DES circulars in relation to recruitment and Garda vetting
- The school has a codes of conduct for school personnel (teaching and non-teaching staff)
- The school has a Pastoral Care Policy in place which includes Class teachers, Year Heads, Guidance Counsellors, Special Education Co-ordinator, Deputy Principals and Principal
- The school complies with the agreed disciplinary procedures for teaching staff
- The school has a Special Educational Needs policy
- The school has in place a One-One Teaching Policy
- The school has an intimate care policy/plan in respect of students who require such care
- The school has in place a policy and procedures for the administration of medication to pupils
- The school –

- Has provided each member of school staff with a copy of the school's Child Safeguarding Statement
- Ensures all new staff are provided with a copy of the school's Child Safeguarding Statement
- Encourages staff to avail of relevant training
- Encourages board of management members to avail of relevant training
- Maintains records of all staff and board member training
- The school has in place a policy and procedures for the administration of First Aid and Medication
- The school has in place a Code of Behaviour for pupils
- The school has in place an ICT policy in respect of usage of ICT by pupils
- The school has in place a mobile phone policy in respect of usage of mobile phones by pupils
- The school has in place a Remote Learning Policy
- The school has in place a Critical Incident Management Plan
- The school has in place a policy and procedures for the use of external persons to supplement delivery of the curriculum
- The school has in place a policy and clear procedures for one-to-one teaching activities
- The school has in place a policy and procedures for one-to-one counselling
- The school has in place a policy and procedures in respect of student teacher placements
- The school has in place a policy and procedures in respect of pupils of the school undertaking work experience in external organisations

In undertaking this risk assessment, the board of management has endeavoured to identify as far as possible the risks of harm that are relevant to this school and to ensure that adequate procedures are in place to manage all risks identified. While it is not possible to foresee and remove all risk of harm, the school has in place the procedures listed in this risk assessment to manage and reduce risk to the greatest possible extent.

The staff, parents, students and Board of Management of this school have identified the following as areas of specific concern in relation to child protection. Following discussion and consultation the Staff and Board of Management have agreed that the following practices be adopted:

### **Protocol Authorising Immediate Action**

The following protocol authorises immediate action under section 7.2 of the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023)'.

In the context of these procedures, where circumstances warrant it, as an essential precautionary measure in order to protect the children in the school, the school principal is authorised by the school management authority to direct an employee to immediately absent himself or herself from the school without loss of pay until the matter has been considered by the employer. It is very important to note that the action under the protocol is intended to be precautionary and not disciplinary. The action under this protocol is an interim measure pending the employer's further consideration of the matter.

The employee will be invited to a meeting with the principal, the purpose of which is to inform the employee of the allegation and the action being taken. The employee may be accompanied by an appropriate person of his or her choice and will be so advised. In any event, the employee will also



be advised of the matter, in writing. The principal shall make a record of the meeting which shall be retained on the relevant case file.

### **Arrival, Departure and Absences during the School Day**

There is a policy of collective responsibility for supervision in the college from 8.30 a.m. until 4.05 p.m. (1.25pm on Wednesday). Individual teachers are assigned specific areas of the college to supervise at the morning, lunch and afternoon breaks under the Supervision and Substitution Scheme. In the interests of safety parents are not to drop or collect students on the school premises before school begins and at the end of the school day. Students are not allowed to park their cars in the Staff Car Park or anywhere on the school premises.

The college doors open at 8.45am (canteen open from 8.00am.). Students who wish to leave during the school day must present written permission from their parent/guardian to school management prior to leaving the premises. They must report to the Deputy's Principal's office on their return

If a student becomes ill during the school day they will get signed permission from their teacher to attend the Infirmary. This permission note must be counter signed in the Deputy's Principal's office. The school management will phone the parent/guardian to take the child home if they are not able to continue on in school.

If the school is unable to contact parents/guardians the student remains in school unless seriously ill, in which case the student will be taken straight to doctor/hospital (sanction for this is sought at time of enrolment). If it is considered necessary, an ambulance may be called and the student will be accompanied to hospital.

If students who wish to leave during the school day forget to bring in written permission, a parent/guardian must come into the Deputy Principal's office and personally 'sign out' the student.

### **Prevention Measures**

The Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Programme is the primary resource used in this school to provide education for children on abuse prevention. The programme is taught as part of the school's core curriculum to all students from 1<sup>st</sup> Year to 6<sup>th</sup> Year.

All college staff will make every effort to ensure that the messages of the Child Protection Guidelines are reinforced whenever possible.

### **Accidents**

While every precaution will be taken under our Health and Safety Statement to ensure the safety of students, we realise that accidents will happen. Accidents will be noted in our Incident Book and will be filed in the Secretary's office.

### **Attendance**

School attendance will be monitored as per our Pupil Attendance Policy. With regards to child protection we will pay particular attention to trends in non-attendance. We will also monitor non-attendance in correlation with signs of neglect/physical/emotional abuse.

### **Behaviour**

Children are encouraged at all times to behave appropriately as per our Code of Behaviour. If an incident occurs which is considered to be of a sexualised nature the DLP must be notified. The incident will be recorded and responded to appropriately.

### **Bullying**

Procedures for reporting and the action to be taken are outlined in the school's Anti-Bullying Policy. Principal, Deputy Principals, Guidance Counsellors, Year Heads and/or Class Teachers may be involved in dealing with incidents of bullying that may arise.

### **Children travelling in staff cars**

Members of the school staff will not carry children alone in their cars at any time.

### **Communication**

Every effort will be made to enhance pupil-teacher communication. If pupils have concerns they will be listened to sympathetically. The SPHE/CSPE/RE programmes allow for open pupil-teacher communication, which is hoped will aid the pupil-teacher relationship. If teachers have to communicate with pupils on a one-to-one basis, they are requested to leave the classroom door open.

### **Induction of Staff**

The DLP will be responsible for informing all new teachers and ancillary staff of the requirements of the Children First Act 2015, Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017, the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017 and Tusla Guidance on the preparation of Child Safeguarding Statements. The Deputy Principals are responsible for ensuring that 3<sup>rd</sup> level student on Teaching Placements have a copy of all college policies.

### **Induction of Pupils**

All parents and children will be made aware of attendance rules and their implications as laid down in the Education Welfare Act (2000). All parents will be informed of the programmes in place in the school that deal with personal development e.g. SPHE, CSPE and RSE Programmes. All new parents are given a copy of the school's Admissions policy, which outlines the procedures parents and children should use when contacting the school if there are absences or concerns of an educational/personal/family matter. Parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the class teacher/Principal/Deputy Principal if they wish to discuss their child's progress. All parents are given a copy of the school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies.

### **Record Keeping**

Teachers will keep each child's file updated with results of assessments carried out, dates and details of meetings with parents and notes from parents. The records are kept in a secure place. Sensitive information regarding children will be shared on a need-to-know basis. All hardcopy files of pupils who no longer attend this school are kept in the administration/management offices for 5 years as per the school's Data Protection Policy.

### **Supervision**

The school's supervision policy will be followed by all staff to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of students at all breaks and arrival and departure. Principal/Deputy Principal will be involved in before/after school supervision. A rota will be displayed to cover morning and lunchtime breaks. All after-school activities will be supervised by a staff member at all times.

### **Visitors**

All visitors to the college must report to the reception. Signage is in place to remind them of same

### **Guest Speakers/Visiting Teachers**

As and from 29<sup>th</sup> April 2016, the Vetting Act requires that St. Columba's College must not, other than where certain exemptions (which are set out at section 6.4 Circular 0031/2016) apply, contract, permit or place a person to undertake relevant work or activities prior to the school authority receiving a vetting disclosure from the Bureau in respect of that person. Class teachers must remain with the class at all times when a guest speaker/visiting teacher is engaging with the pupils.

### **Toileting/Intimate Care/Toileting Accidents**

In situations where a pupil has toileting/intimate care needs a meeting will be held with the parent, teacher, SNA and, if appropriate, the child, after enrolment to discuss the issue and procedures to be followed.

### **One-to one Teaching**

Where teachers are teaching children individually they may only do so in classrooms that have a clear glass panel in the door. A letter of consent for individual tuition must also be signed by parent/guardian.

### **Talking to Students**

Should a teacher wish to speak to a student on a one-to-one or vice versa, it is advised that such conversations take place in an area which can be observed by other staff members.

### **Recruitment and Selection of Staff**

The Board of Management of St. Columba's College fully endorses arrangements for the vetting of teaching and non-teaching staff as outlined in Circular 0031/2016 by the D.E.S.

### **Photographs**

On admission to the school, Parents/Guardians are requested to sign a permission note for photographs of their children to be taken. Photographs by outside agencies (i.e. Press Photographers etc.) are taken under the supervision of a staff member. Photographs of students will only be used by the school authorities for their intended purpose. (Data Protection policy)

### **Internet Use**

Internet use is considered a school resource and a privilege. Procedures are outlined in our Acceptable Use Policy

### **Substance Use**

St. Columba's College acknowledges that that the school has an important role in terms of education, prevention, support and handling substance abuse related incidents. Our approach is outlined in our Substance Use Policy.

While every effort will be made to adhere to best practice as agreed and outlined above, in the event of an emergency where this is not possible or practicable, a full record of any incident should be made and reported to the Principal and parents.