**An Roinn Oideachais**

**Department of Education**

# Child Protection and Safeguarding Initial Inspection

# INITIAL REPORT

| | |
|---|---|
| **Ainm na scoile / School name** | Ratoath College |
| **Seoladh na scoile / School address** | Jamestown<br>Ratoath<br>Co. Meath |
| **Uimhir rolla / Roll number** | 76088T |

## Date of inspection: 21-10-2021

An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

## 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 2017*. 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 2017* 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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

## HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

The checks conducted during this inspection are based on the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.*

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 2017*.

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:

- Very good
- Good
- Satisfactory
- Fair
- Weak

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 2017* 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 2017*. 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.<br><br>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 2017* checked** | **Fully Compliant**<br>**Substantially Compliant**<br>**Partially Compliant**<br>**Not compliant**<br>**Not applicable** |
|---|---|
| 1. The school has communicated the required aspects of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017* 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 2017*. | **Fully Compliant** |
| 3. The board of management reports 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 reports 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 2017.* | **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 2017*. | **Fully Compliant** |
| 7. Correct record keeping procedures were found in the child protection cases examined. | **Substantially Compliant** |

| | |
|---|---|
| • ***Additional Information:*** Hardcopy files relating to child protection concerns are available in a secure location and are accessible by the DLP and deputy DLP. Unique identifier numbers relating to relevant parties referenced were not evident within the files.<br>• ***Action Advised***: The school should ensure that unique identifier numbers are assigned to all relevant parties referenced within child protection files. | |
| 8. The procedures to report child protection concerns were fully implemented in the records examined. | **Partially Compliant** |
| • ***Additional Information:*** A written record from the DLP of how a child protection concern came to his attention is retained on the relevant file for all concerns in respect of learners in the school. However, ***t***he files examined during the inspection did not all contain all required documents. The missing documents include copies of the report made to Tusla, and records of communication by the DLP to the parent/carer of the child. In most cases where a teacher had raised a child protection concern, a record that the teacher was informed that advice was being sought or was provided with the advice received, was not available.<br>• ***Action Advised***: All child protection files should contain all required documents. Particular care should be taken to ensure that the initial report to Tusla is available in each file. Documents that demonstrate that parents/carers are appropriately informed of child protection concerns and that teachers who raise concerns are informed of how the concern is being progressed should also be available. The school may find the suite of optional templates available at gov.ie helpful in implementing these actions in particular optional template C in relation to the DLP informing or not informing a parent/carer that a report concerning his or her child is being made. | |
| 9. The procedures to report allegations or suspicions of abuse against school personnel were fully implemented in the records examined.<br>*(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 is a Social Personal and Health Education Programme for all students in Junior Cycle. | **Yes** |
| There is a Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme (RSE) for all students in the school. | **Yes** |
| The overall quality of planning for and implementation of the SPHE curriculum and the RSE programme is good.<br>A review of SPHE and RSE planning documents and of school timetable information indicates that the school has planned appropriately for the implementation of the SPHE curriculum and the RSE programme.<br>The SPHE curriculum and the RSE programme are coordinated jointly in the school. The coordinators outlined the various elements of the school's approach to learning in these areas. | |

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 mental health, LGBTIQ+, consent, and relationships. They also offered perspectives and valuable insights about how provision for RSE and SPHE, as well as the overall student experience in the school might be further enhanced. In particular, students were concerned with the timely teaching of certain areas of the curriculum and the need to teach certain aspects of the curricula earlier in order to help them make informed decisions relating to relationships and wellbeing. These valuable insights, if captured, would support further development in the areas of SPHE and RSE.

Parental responses to the online survey administered as part of the inspection were positive in relation to the school's provision for SPHE and RSE and the majority of respondents agreed that their child learns about bullying and RSE in school.

*Published January 2022 / Foilsithe Eanáir 2022*