



**OUR LADY OF MERCY SECONDARY SCHOOL**

**Child Safeguarding Statement & Risk Assessment**

# Child Safeguarding Statement

Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School is a voluntary post-primary school providing post-primary education to students from First Year to Leaving Certificate Year.

In accordance with the requirements of the [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 \(revised 2023\)](#) and [Tusla Guidance on the preparation of Child Safeguarding Statements](#), the Board of Management of Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School has agreed the Child Safeguarding Statement set out in this document.

In this statement, the following terms have the following meaning:

- **parent** refers to parent/parents or legal guardian/guardians.
- **staff** refers to teachers, SNAs, examiners, supervisors, secretarial staff, support staff, caretaker, maintenance staff and other adults as inferred by the context.

- 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 (revised 2023)* as part of this overall Child Safeguarding Statement
- 2 The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Pádraic Gibbons
- 3 The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Nuala Brady
- 4 The Relevant Person is Pádraic Gibbons
- 5 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.

- 6 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 (revised 2023)* and to the relevant agreed disciplinary procedures for school staff which are published on the gov.ie 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 gov.ie 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-
  1. Has provided each member of staff with a copy of the school’s Child Safeguarding Statement.
  2. Ensures all new staff are provided with a copy of the school’s Child Safeguarding Statement.
  3. Has provided each member of staff with a copy of Circular 0036/2023 (Publication of Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post- Primary Schools (revised 2023)).
  4. Has provided each member of staff with a copy of the DES Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023).
  5. Has provided each member of staff with a copy of the Children First Act 2015.
  6. Has provided each member of staff with a copy of Addendum to Children First (2019).
  7. Encourages staff to avail of relevant training.
  8. Encourages Board of Management members to avail of relevant training.
  9. The Board of Management maintains records of all staff and Board member training.
  10. Ensures all new staff are provided with a copy of the relevant documents as listed 1-6 above.
- 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 (revised 2023)*, including in the case of registered teachers, those in relation to mandated reporting under the Children First Act 2015.
- All registered teachers employed by the school are mandated persons 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.
- 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.

**Important Note:** It should be noted that risk in the context of this risk assessment is the risk of “*harm*” as defined in the Children First Act, 2015 and not general health and safety risk. The definition of harm is set out in chapter 4 of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.

- The various procedures referred to in this Statement can be accessed via the school’s website, the gov.ie website or will be made available on request by the school.

**Note:** The above is not intended as an exhaustive list. Individual Boards of Management shall also include in this section such other procedures/measures that are of relevance to the school in question.

- 7 This statement has been published on the school’s website and has been provided to all members of school personnel, the Parents’ Association 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.
- 8 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 adopted by the Board of Management 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024.

This Child Safeguarding Statement was reviewed by the Board of Management on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024.

Signed:



Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024

Date of next review: September 2025

Signed:



Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024

# Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment of Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School

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 (revised 2023)*, the following is the Written Risk Assessment of Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School.

## 1. List of school activities:

- Daily arrival and dismissal of Students
- Recreation breaks for Students.
- Classroom teaching.
- One-to-one teaching.
- One-to-one learning support
- One-to-one counselling
- 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.
- Annual Sports Day
- Fundraising events involving Students.
- Use of off-site facilities for school activities
- 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 Students, 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 and RSE.
- Prevention and dealing with bullying amongst Students.
- 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 Students with specific vulnerabilities/ needs such as
  - Students from ethnic minorities/migrants.
  - Members of the Traveller community.
  - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) children.
  - Students perceived to be LGBT.
  - Students of minority religious faiths
  - Children in care
  - Children on Tusla's Child Protection Notification System (CPNS)
  - Children with medical needs.
- Recruitment of school personnel including -
  - Teachers/SNAs
  - 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 Students in religious ceremonies/religious instruction external to the school
  - Use of Information and Communication Technology by Students in school, including social media
  - Application of sanctions under the school's Code of Behaviour including detention of Students, 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.
  - Use of school premises by other organisation during school day.
  - Breakfast and Lunch club.
  - Homework club/evening study.

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

**Important Note:** It should be noted that risk in the context of this risk assessment is the risk of “*harm*” as defined in the Children First Act, 2015 and not general health and safety risk. The definition of harm is set out in chapter 4 of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.

- 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 school.
- 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 trip, swimming lessons.
- Risk of harm due to inappropriate use of online remote teaching and learning communication platform such as an uninvited person accessing the lesson link, students being left unsupervised for long periods of time in breakout rooms.
- Risk of harm due to bullying of child.
- Risk of harm due to racism.
- Risk of harm due to inadequate supervision of children in school.
- Risk of harm due to inadequate supervision of children while attending out of school activities.
- 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 to children with SEN who have particular vulnerabilities, including medical 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 Students in an inappropriate manner via social media, texting, digital device or other manner.
- Risk of harm caused by member of school personnel accessing/circulating inappropriate material via social media, texting, digital device or other manner.

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

- All school personnel are provided with a copy of the school's Child Safeguarding Statement.
- The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (revised 2023) are made available to all school personnel.
- School Personnel are required to adhere to the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary


Schools (revised 2023) and all registered teaching staff are required to adhere to the Children First Act 2015 and its Addendum (2019).

- The school implements in full the SPHE 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 clear procedures to ensure appropriate supervision of students during breaks and in respect of specific areas such as toilets, changing rooms etc.
- The school has in place a policy and clear procedures in respect of school trips.
- The school has a Health and Safety Policy statement.
- 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 clear procedures in place relating to conduct for school personnel (teaching and non-teaching staff): Garda Vetting through the NVB, Teaching Council Registration, Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers, and contracts for non-teaching staff include a section on acceptable behaviour.
- The school complies with the agreed disciplinary procedures for teaching staff, SNAs and has in place an agreed set of disciplinary procedures for ancillary staff.
- The school has an Additional Educational Needs policy.
- The school ensures that an intimate care plan is in place in respect of students who require such care. (Note: The school does not currently have any students with intimacy care needs).
- The school has clear procedures for the administration of medication to students.
- 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.
  - Ensures staff 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 clear procedures in place for the administration of First Aid.
- The school has in place a Code of Behaviour for students.
- The school has an Acceptable Use Policy in place, to include provision for online teaching and learning remotely, and has communicated this policy to parents.
- The school has a Distance Learning Policy in place and has communicated this policy to parents.
- The school has in place a policy governing the use of smart phones and tablet devices in the school by students as per circular 38/2018.
- The school has in place a Critical Incident Management Plan.
- The school has in place a Home School Liaison policy and related procedures.
- The school has in place procedures for the use of external persons to supplement delivery of the curriculum.
- The school has procedures in place for the use of external sports coaches.
- The school has clear procedures in place for one-to-one teaching activities.
- The school has clear procedures in place for one-to-one counselling.
- The school has clear procedures in respect of student teacher placements.
- The school has clear procedures in respect of students at the school undertaking work experience.

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.

This risk assessment has been completed by the Board of Management on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024. It will be reviewed as part of the school's annual review of its Child Safeguarding Statement.

Signed:



Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024

Date of next review: September 2025

Signed:



Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024