



Circular Number 41/2025

**To: The Managerial Authorities of Recognised Primary, Secondary,
Community, and Comprehensive Schools
and
The Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards**

Publication of *Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025*

1. Purpose of this circular

The main purpose of this circular is to advise school management authorities that following consultations between the Department of Education and Youth and the education partners, the *Child Protection Procedures for Schools* hereinafter referred to as the “updated procedures” have been updated and republished.

2. General and date effective

- 2.1** The updated procedures replace the procedures which were published in 2017 and revised in 2023 and this circular supersedes circular 0036/2023.
- 2.2** These updated procedures apply to all recognised primary and post-primary schools and to centres for education (as defined in the Education Act 1998), including boarding facilities associated with recognised schools, which are attended by children and young people under the age of 18 years.
- 2.3** The updated procedures should be brought to the attention of all school personnel and board of management members. 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 ensure that the latest templates provided by the Department for the Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment are being used. Resources available on gov.ie/childprotectionschools.
- 2.4** Training for Designated Liaison Persons (DLPs) and Deputy Designated Liaison Persons (DDLPs) will be provided by the Department. Attendance



at this training is a requirement and a record of the training must be retained by the school.

- 2.5** Training for all school personnel, including mandated and non-mandated persons, will be provided by the Department. All school personnel shall attend training in child protection as may be directed by the board of management.
- 2.6** The updated procedures are published on the Department's website and can be accessed on www.gov.ie/childprotectionschools

3. Children First Act 2015 and Children First National Guidance 2017

- 3.1** Since the publication of the procedures in 2017 and their revision in 2023, schools have become very familiar with the statutory obligations which the Children First Act 2015 has placed on certain professionals, including all registered teachers, who are referred to as mandated persons in the Act. The Act has also placed statutory obligations on certain organisations that provide services to children, including all schools.
- 3.2** Schools must comply with the obligations which are outlined in the Children First National Guidance 2017 that apply to mandated persons such as registered teachers and the statutory obligations that apply to organisations, such as schools, under the Act. The Act also sets out the best practice (non-statutory) obligations which are in place for all individuals (including teachers) and for all sectors of society. The Children First Act 2015 operates side-by-side with the Children First National Guidance 2017.

4. Purpose of the updated procedures

- 4.1** The updated procedures continue to give direction and guidance to school authorities and to school personnel in relation to meeting their statutory obligations under the Children First Act 2015 and in the continued implementation of the best practice (non-statutory) guidance set out in Children First National Guidance 2017.
- 4.2** A summary of the chapters and the main changes in the updated procedures are outlined in Appendix 1 of this circular.

5. Next steps



- 5.1** It is the responsibility of each relevant school authority to put in place the necessary arrangements to ensure full compliance with the updated procedures.

6. Support for schools

- 6.1** New booklets containing updated templates have been provided to support schools in implementing the updated procedures. The booklets and other supports, including those available from Tusla, are available on www.gov.ie/childprotectionschools.

7. Queries in relation to the updated procedures

- 7.1** Any queries relating to the updated procedures should be raised in the first instance with the Designated Liaison Person or board of management of the school, as appropriate.
- 7.2** General queries in relation to the updated procedures should be e-mailed to the Department at: childprotection@education.gov.ie

8. Dissemination of circular

- 8.1** A copy of this circular should be provided to members of the board of management and to all school personnel. A copy should also be provided to the parents' association. This circular may be accessed on the Department of Education website at www.gov.ie/childprotectionschools. An Irish version of this circular is also available on the Department's website.

**Issued by: Joanne Tobin
Principal Officer
Child Protection Unit**

Date Issued: May 2025



APPENDIX 1

SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS AND MAIN CHANGES

Chapter 1 - Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to the procedures and includes details of the legal framework on which child welfare and protection policy is based.

It has been updated to include The Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 and The Online Safety and Media Regulation (OSMR) Act 2022.

Chapter 2 – Definition and Recognition of Child Abuse

This chapter describes the four main types of abuse and outlines how abuse can be recognised. It also includes a section on dealing with disclosures from children.

The chapter has been updated to incorporate sections relating to when bullying becomes a child protection concern and the interaction between *Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations – Guidelines for Schools in Supporting Students* and child protection matters.

Chapter 3 – Retrospective Abuse Allegations

This is a new chapter in the procedures in respect of retrospective abuse allegations – abuse that an adult experienced which occurred in their childhood. It outlines when a mandated person is required to report such allegations to Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána, incorporating the Addendum to Children First (2025), and provides advice to schools on how to respond when an adult brings an allegation to their attention.

Chapter 4 – Roles and Responsibilities

This chapter outlines the roles and responsibilities of all school personnel in relation to the safeguarding of children. It has been updated to ensure clarity on the role of mandated persons and non-mandated members of school personnel. It outlines the role of the board of management and the patron in respect of child protection matters. It also includes details of the expanded role of the Deputy Designated Liaison Persons (DDLDP).

Chapter 5 – Reporting of Concerns



This chapter outlines the reporting procedures to be followed for all school personnel to ensure that where they receive an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused or neglected, is being abused or neglected or is at risk of abuse or neglect, that the matter is reported without delay. It provides specific details of action to be taken by members of school personnel, registered teachers, the DLP and DDLP in such cases. It also outlines action to be taken when a parent reports a child protection concern in relation to their own child or where a child protection concern is raised by someone outside the school community.

Chapter 6 – How to Make a Report to Tusla

This chapter outlines the procedures to follow to ensure that all child protection and safeguarding concerns are reported to Tusla, including where urgent intervention is required. It also outlines what happens after the report is received by Tusla.

Chapter 7 – Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse Regarding School Employees

This chapter provides guidance to schools in situations where an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee, including allegations against the DLP or a member of the board of management. It has been updated to include allegations against volunteers and a section on child protection concerns raised by a parent against a member of school personnel.

Chapter 8 – Record Keeping

This chapter outlines the key principles of record keeping in respect of child protection concerns. It has been included as a separate chapter in the procedures to support adherence to best practice in relation to record keeping. It includes guidance on the creation of child protection case files, storage of records, and requirements around redaction and anonymisation of files.

Chapter 9 – Child Safeguarding Requirements

This chapter provides guidance to school boards of management in relation to meeting their statutory obligations in respect of the provision of a child safeguarding statement and risk assessment. It includes guidance on the publication, display and sharing of the school's Child Safeguarding Statement, the process of undertaking a risk assessment, and the annual review of the Child Safeguarding Statement.

Chapter 10 – Recruitment Procedures and Requirements for Garda Vetting



This chapter provides guidance for schools on recruitment procedures and Garda vetting. It has been updated to strengthen the requirements on seeking references and provision of references. It also reinforces the requirement for schools to ensure that all persons taking up positions in the school must provide valid statutory declarations and form of undertakings.

Chapter 11 – Training and Supports

This new chapter outlines the necessity of boards of management to ensure that all school personnel and board of management members have the necessary familiarity with the procedures to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities. It includes the need to ensure that training is refreshed at least every three years.

Chapter 12 - Oversight

This chapter outlines the important oversight measures required to ensure and demonstrate that the statutory obligations of the Children First Act and the best practice obligations of Children First National Guidance are being adhered to.