Child Safeguarding Statement 2025

School Address*: Our Lady of Good Counsel School,*

Innishmore, Ballincollig, Cork. P31FH22

Phone number: ***0214878370***

Roll number: ***18208A***

School Patron: ***The Bishop of Cork and Ross, Bishop Fintan Gavin*****.**

Principal: ***Aisling Power*****.**

Deputy Principal: ***Nollaig Moynihan.***

Chairperson: ***Harold Brooks***

Reviewed by the Board on 18th November 2025*, following BOM Training with STAY SAFE, and adapted by the Board on that date, under Chairperson Billy Murphy*

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Child Safeguarding Statement 2025/2026.

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1. Commitment to Safeguarding

Our Lady of Good Counsel Special School provides education for pupils aged 4 to 18 years with a diagnosis Moderate Intellectual Disabilitiy.

The Board of Management recognises that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance and is committed to fully complying with its statutory obligations under:

- The Children First Act 2015
- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children
- Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025

- Circular 0041/2025
- Relevant child protection, education, health and safety and data protection legislation

The Board of Management has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the **Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025** as part of this Child Safeguarding Statement.

This statement applies to all school personnel, pupils, parents, volunteers, contractors, visiting professionals and anyone providing services within the school setting.

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2. Principles of Best Practice

The school will:

- Recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance.
- Fully comply with statutory child protection requirements.
- Promote a culture of safeguarding throughout the school.
- Ensure all concerns regarding child welfare are reported and managed appropriately.
- Fully cooperate with Tusla, An Garda Síochána and other relevant agencies.
- Respect confidentiality while ensuring information is shared appropriately to safeguard children.
- Promote the participation, voice and rights of children in accordance with their age, understanding and communication abilities.
- Take particular account of the vulnerabilities that may arise for pupils with disabilities, complex needs and communication difficulties.
- Ensure safeguarding considerations are embedded across all areas of school life.

The school will also apply these principles to adult pupils who may be considered vulnerable.

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3. Designated Liaison Persons

The Board of Management has appointed:

Designated Liaison Person (DLP): Aisling Power

Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLP): Nollaig Moynihan

The DLP and DDLP are responsible for:

- Receiving child protection concerns.
- Liaising with Tusla, An Garda Síochána and other agencies where required.
- Maintaining records of child protection reports and concerns.
- Providing advice and support to staff.
- Ensuring implementation of the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025.

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4. Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment

The Board of Management has completed a Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment and has identified the following areas of potential risk together with the procedures in place to manage them.

Risks Relevant to All Schools

- Bullying, including cyberbullying
- Inappropriate behaviour by adults towards children
- Peer-on-peer harmful behaviour
- One-to-one teaching and support situations
- School tours and educational visits
- Online learning and use of digital technology
- Care of pupils during breaks and transitions
- Recruitment and employment of staff
- Visitor access to the school

Additional Risks Relevant to a Special School Setting

- Personal care, toileting and intimate care support
- Feeding assistance and medical care
- Lifting, hoisting and physical assistance
- Close physical contact arising from educational, therapy or behavioural support needs
- Reduced verbal communication or alternative communication methods
- Increased vulnerability due to dependency on adults

- Behaviour support interventions and physical intervention where required
- Use of sensory spaces, calm rooms and individual work areas
- Transport arrangements and supervision during arrivals and departures
- Work with external therapists and visiting professionals
- Pupils accessing community-based learning programmes and off-site activities
- Communication barriers affecting disclosure of abuse or neglect
- Increased risk of social isolation or reduced self-advocacy

The school maintains procedures to minimise these risks and reviews them annually.

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5. Procedures and Measures in Place

The school has the following procedures and measures in place:

Child Protection Procedures

The school fully implements the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025.

Staff Recruitment and Vetting

The school complies with:

- National Vetting Bureau legislation
- Department of Education recruitment procedures
- Relevant child protection requirements relating to employment and volunteering

Reporting Child Protection Concerns

All school personnel are required to:

- Recognise and respond appropriately to concerns regarding child welfare.
- Report concerns to the DLP without delay.
- Cooperate fully with child protection processes.
- Follow the reporting procedures outlined in the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025.

Mandated Reporting

Registered teachers employed by the school are mandated persons under the Children First Act 2015.

Where applicable, other professionals working in the school may also have mandated reporting obligations arising from their professional registration.

Historical or Non-Recent Abuse Disclosures

The school will respond to disclosures of non-recent abuse in accordance with the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025 and will assess any continuing risk to children.

Allegations Against Staff

The school will manage allegations against school employees in accordance with Chapter 10 of the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025 and relevant employment procedures.

Record Keeping

The school maintains secure and confidential records relating to:

- Child protection concerns
- Reports submitted to Tusla
- Actions taken
- Communications with relevant agencies
- Safeguarding training records

Information is shared strictly on a need-to-know basis.

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6. Safeguarding Measures Specific to a Special School

Recognising the particular needs of pupils attending the school, the following additional safeguarding measures are in place:

Communication Supports

The school:

- Uses appropriate communication systems including AAC, Lámh, visual supports, PECS and assistive technology.

- Supports pupils in expressing concerns in ways appropriate to their communication needs.
- Recognises that behaviour may be a form of communication.

Intimate and Personal Care

The school operates procedures covering:

- Toileting support
- Changing procedures
- Feeding assistance
- Personal hygiene support
- Physical assistance and mobility support

These procedures promote dignity, privacy and safeguarding for pupils and staff.

Behaviour Support

The school ensures:

- Positive Behaviour Support approaches are used.
- Behaviour plans are reviewed regularly.
- Physical interventions are only used where necessary, lawful and proportionate.
- Appropriate records are maintained.

Therapy and External Services

All therapists, contractors, visiting professionals, students on placement and external service providers are required to:

- Follow the school's safeguarding procedures.
- Comply with vetting requirements where applicable.
- Act in accordance with professional safeguarding standards.

Transport and Community Access

Safeguarding considerations are incorporated into:

- School transport arrangements
- Community access programmes
- Educational outings
- Work experience placements
- Off-site educational activities

7. Training and Awareness

The Board of Management will ensure:

- All staff receive safeguarding information and training in accordance with Department requirements.
- New staff receive a copy of the Child Safeguarding Statement and safeguarding procedures.
- Whole-school child protection training is completed as required under the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025.
- DLP and DDLP undertake relevant safeguarding training.
- Training records are maintained.

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8. Relevant Person

In accordance with the Children First Act 2015, the Board of Management has appointed:

Aisling Power, Principal and Designated Liaison Person

as the Relevant Person for the purposes of this Child Safeguarding Statement.

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9. Review

This Child Safeguarding Statement has been prepared following completion of the Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment and will be reviewed:

- Annually,
- Following any material change in circumstances, and
- In accordance with the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025.

The Board of Management will complete the required Child Safeguarding Statement Review Checklist as part of the annual review process.

Adoption

This Child Safeguarding Statement was adopted by the Board of Management on:

Date: 18th November 2025

Signed: Billy Murphy

Chairperson.

Signed: Aisling Power
Principal

Principal / Secretary to the Board of Management

Publication;This Child Safeguarding Statement has been made available to school personnel, parents, the patron and the wider school community. It is published on the school website and is available to Tusla and the Department of Education upon request.

Appendix A

Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment

Our Lady of Good Counsel Special School

In accordance with the Children First Act 2015, Children First National Guidance, and the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025, the Board of Management has carried out a risk assessment of potential harm to pupils while attending school or participating in school activities.

The term *harm* is as defined in the Children First Act 2015 and includes assault, ill-treatment, neglect or sexual abuse.

The following risk assessment identifies areas of potential risk and the procedures in place to manage those risks.

Activity / Area of Risk	Potential Risk of Harm	Control Measures / Procedures
Arrival and dismissal	Child not appropriately supervised	Supervision rota; designated arrival and collection procedures; pupil handover protocols
School transport	Inappropriate behaviour; inadequate supervision; communication difficulties	Transport protocols; escort supervision; reporting procedures; communication with transport providers
Classroom teaching	One-to-one situations; inappropriate interactions	Open-door visibility where possible; professional boundaries; Code of Conduct
Small group teaching	Allegations arising from isolated working arrangements	Staff awareness; visibility panels; safeguarding training
Intimate care and toileting	Actual or alleged inappropriate contact	Intimate Care Policy; staff training; dignity and privacy procedures; recording system
Personal hygiene support	Inappropriate physical contact	Agreed care plans; staff guidance; safeguarding supervision
Feeding assistance	Vulnerability during close care activities	Individual support plans; staff training; supervision arrangements
Lifting, transfers and hoisting	Inappropriate physical contact allegations	Manual handling training; care plans; equipment protocols

Administration of medication	Mismanagement or inappropriate access to pupils	Medication policy; documentation and oversight procedures
Personal care rooms	Reduced visibility and potential vulnerability	Staff protocols; maintained records; regular monitoring
Sensory rooms	One-to-one contact; reduced observation	Risk assessments; visibility checks; supervision procedures
Calm rooms / regulation spaces	Isolation or inadequate supervision	Behaviour support plans; staff oversight; recording procedures
Physical intervention	Potential injury or allegation	Positive Behaviour Support Policy; approved intervention training; incident recording
Behaviour support programmes	Misinterpretation of support practices	Individualised plans; multidisciplinary review; parental involvement
Communication difficulties	Abuse or neglect not disclosed	AAC systems; Lámh; visual supports; staff training in communication and disclosure
Non-verbal pupils	Inability to report concerns	Safeguarding observation systems; behaviour monitoring; trusted adult approach
Behaviour as communication	Indicators of harm overlooked	Staff training; multidisciplinary discussion; safeguarding awareness
Use of AAC devices	Exposure to inappropriate content; privacy concerns	Acceptable Use Policy; monitoring systems; supervision
Online safety	Cyberbullying; grooming; harmful content	Digital Learning Policy; filtering systems; internet safety education
School-issued devices	Inappropriate use or access	Acceptable Use Agreements; supervision and monitoring
Photography and video recording	Unauthorised use of images	Consent procedures; data protection protocols
School trips and outings	Reduced supervision in community settings	Risk assessments; supervision ratios; emergency procedures
Community access programmes	Increased exposure to public settings	Individual risk assessments; staff supervision

Swimming programmes	Increased vulnerability during changing and supervision	Specific risk assessment; supervision arrangements; changing procedures
Work experience placements	Inappropriate adult contact	Vetting and placement assessments; staff monitoring
Visiting therapists	Safeguarding procedures not understood	Induction procedures; safeguarding compliance requirements
External agencies	Inconsistent safeguarding standards	Service agreements; safeguarding expectations clearly communicated
Student teachers and placements	Lack of familiarity with procedures	Induction; supervision; safeguarding declaration
Volunteers	Unsuitable access to children	Vetting where required; supervision procedures
Contractors and maintenance personnel	Unsupervised access to pupils	Visitor sign-in; restricted access; supervision
Visitors to the school	Unauthorised contact with pupils	Visitor management procedures; identification system
Break times and yard supervision	Bullying; accidents; inadequate supervision	Supervision roster; anti-bullying procedures
Peer-on-peer behaviour	Physical, emotional or sexual harm	Anti-Bullying Policy; Behaviour Policy; reporting procedures
Personal relationships between pupils	Harmful sexual behaviour	SPHE/RSE programmes; safeguarding procedures; staff training
Changing behaviours or regression	Indicators of abuse missed	Monitoring systems; safeguarding reporting processes
Self-injurious behaviour	Underlying abuse not recognised	Behaviour analysis; safeguarding review procedures
Use of restrictive practices	Inappropriate restriction of pupils	Restrictive Practice Policy; monitoring and review systems
Medical and therapy interventions	Allegations concerning treatment	Consent procedures; professional standards; documentation
Residential respite links (where applicable)	Information-sharing failures	Clear communication pathways; safeguarding liaison

Remote learning or virtual contact	Unsupervised online communication	Approved platforms only; professional boundaries guidance
Staff recruitment	Unsuitable person employed	Garda Vetting; reference checks; recruitment procedures
Agency and substitute staff	Inadequate safeguarding awareness	Induction process; safeguarding briefing
Child protection reporting	Failure to act on concerns	DLP/DDLP procedures; Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025
Historical abuse disclosures	Ongoing risks not identified	Assessment by DLP; reporting procedures; risk evaluation
Confidential records	Breach of confidentiality	Secure storage; GDPR compliance; restricted access
Safeguarding culture	Failure to identify concerns	Annual training; review processes; Board oversight

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Additional Special School Safeguarding Considerations

The Board recognises that pupils attending Our Lady of Good Counsel Special School may experience increased vulnerability because of:

- Communication difficulties.
- Reliance on adults for personal care.
- Limited capacity to self-advocate.
- Dependency on adults for movement and transport.
- Complex behavioural, sensory or medical needs.
- Social isolation and increased vulnerability to exploitation.

Accordingly, safeguarding procedures within the school place particular emphasis on:

- Alternative and augmentative communication (AAC).
- Lámh and visual communication systems.
- Behaviour as communication.
- Intimate care safeguards.
- Positive Behaviour Support.
- Safe use of sensory and regulation spaces.
- Comprehensive staff safeguarding training.
- Multi-disciplinary collaboration.
- Accessible pupil safeguarding education.

Board of Management Review Statement

The Board of Management has reviewed the above risk assessment and is satisfied that the identified risks are being managed through the school's policies, procedures and practices and through its implementation of the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025.

Signed: Billy Murphy

Date: 18/12/2025