



ST MARY'S COLLEGE C.S.Sp.

Child Protection Policy & Procedures 2026-27

To be read as an Appendix to the St Mary's Child Safeguarding Statement & Risk Assessment

St Mary's College Mission Statement

‘A Catholic Community committed to education’

“St. Mary's true to its traditions continues to be a community of faith and learning that fosters idealism, inspires hearts and informs minds in the wisdom which enables people to know and to do what is right”.

This community and its mission of educational service are grounded in the Gospels and therefore are inseparable from a value system that includes –

- an acknowledgement of the uniqueness and intrinsic worth of each person;
- encouragement and affirmation for all;
- concern for the needs and rights of others;
- protection for all who are vulnerable in our midst.

Towards this end a community environment is promoted in order to develop students:-

- who are motivated to live their lives in accordance with Gospel values;
- who are inner-directed and capable of choosing freely in accordance with their conscience;
- who will play their full role in the wider community as citizens who are informed, trustworthy and confident in their responsibilities.

Context

In the past years many people who have been educated in Spiritan schools, including St Mary's, came forward to tell the truth about the safeguarding failures they suffered. We would like to reassure them that they have our respect and our support, and that we have reported and will continue to report any past histories of abuse and child safeguarding concerns to the appropriate authorities.

We also recognise that, within St Mary's and in other places, evil acts happened in the past. Some who were trusted by parents to act as Christian educators of their children, failed in these duties, and committed acts that were both sinful and criminal.

Those of us who work now in schools are grateful for the generosity of those who have come forward to seek better standards of care for succeeding generations. In the event that there are future safeguarding failures, which we hope never happens, St Mary's is committed to welcoming those who tell the truth and to seek to ensure that they are shown respect and hospitality. We will all strive to ensure that their testimony is seen as a gift and a contribution to the St Mary's community.

Application of Mission Statement to Child Protection

All school personnel in St Mary's will exercise a duty of care to ensure students are educated in a safe and secure environment.

In our day-to-day work, we abide by legislation, by the St Mary's Child Safeguarding Statement, by this policy, and by the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools which has been adopted by the Board of Management as school policy.

This includes the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (2023), and their requirements for mandated reporting, Child Protection Oversight Reports, and annual review protocols.

Definition and Recognising Child Abuse

Child abuse is categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time. Definitions of the four types of abuse are contained in the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools.

Mandated persons are legally obliged to report any reasonable grounds for concern directly to Tusla, using the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form, even where the DLP does not share the concern.

General principles

Staff-student relationships are governed by professional norms.

The general principle is that staff will apply common sense to their dealing with students, and to behave and be seen to behave in a manner befitting their status as professionals in their field.

In their day-to-day work, staff should ask themselves:

- Could anything they do be construed by a student as inappropriate?
- Could it be seen by another reasonable adult as inappropriate?

Physical contact

In certain situations, a student may need physical contact such as if a student is distressed. These should be acceptable to all parties concerned and the adult must be sensitive to the potential risk of misunderstanding. Similarly, physical contact may be necessary to restrain a student from causing harm to himself or others, or by way of first aid treatment.

Sexual relationships

A sexual relationship between a student of any age, and a member of staff or external coach, is completely forbidden.

One-to-one meetings

One-to-one meetings with students take place in view of passers by, in open rooms or in sight of windows.

If a meeting with a student must be out of sight to maintain that student's privacy, the principal/ deputy should be informed.

Administration of Medication and First Aid to pupils

In emergency situations, staff should do no more than is obviously necessary and appropriate to relieve extreme distress or prevent further and otherwise irreparable harm. Qualified medical treatment should be secured in emergencies at the earliest opportunity.

Administration of medication to pupils by staff members may take place at the request of parents, and the agreement of the Board of Management through the Secretary. It is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that the school is informed of relevant medical conditions and that medications provided are up-to-date. The parents ipso facto indemnify the school by the request to administer medication. Neither the school nor any staff member is obliged to administer medication.

In administering medication to pupils, staff members will exercise the standard of care of a reasonable and prudent parent.

External persons

Student teachers, external persons brought in to supplement the curriculum, and external sports coaches, will be vetted where required by national procedures for schools, and abide by all school policies pertinent to the wellbeing and protection of students and staff.

Students undertaking work experience in the school

Students may undertake work experience in the school, by permission of school management, and with age-appropriate boundaries and safeguards.

Transporting students

When transporting students, common-sense precautions prevail, for example by having others present, and seeking parental consent.

Students on buses will wear safety belts.

Supervision & organisation of changing rooms, toilets, showers

Proper supervision by adults is a key strategy in protecting children. The school has a supervision rota for schooldays. While staff are understandably cautious about adult presence in changing rooms, showers, bedrooms on school trips, and other places where students are changing, students should not feel that there are 'no go' areas where there is no supervision.

It is not unusual or inappropriate for adults to walk through changing rooms or to be in changing rooms before or after, for example, rugby matches. There is a difference between this, and watching students change or being alone with a student in a dressing room. Professional experience will also suggest ways of maintaining adult presence without being inappropriately obtrusive, for example by being in the area outside changing rooms, by knocking at a door, by opening doors with your back turned away and calling students to order, or by asking if everyone is decent before entering.

Trips away, supervising bedrooms

Standard school codes of behaviour, regulations and norms of professional conduct apply on school trips away.

Parents/ Guardians will sign and return the school policy on each overnight trip away before their son can travel.

If students are being hosted, clear rules will be agreed with the host school and families to ensure St. Mary's rules are met.

Staff apply the same norms of common sense supervising bedrooms. Again, professional experience will suggest ways of maintaining a supervisory presence without compromising professional integrity.

Internet & Media

The College has a screening facility to monitor and seek to prevent access to internet sites containing pornography, violence and other inappropriate material. Intentionally accessing such material or facilitating such access is a serious breach of professional discipline.

Teaching materials and aids such as excerpts from films should be age appropriate to the youngest student viewers.

If a teacher has a doubt about a particular material, he/ she should apply the rule of 'better safe than sorry'.

The College publishes an Acceptable use policy for technology including computers, phones and the internet.

Online

In this always-evolving area, it is good to remind ourselves of the general principles already outlined in this document, and to apply them to the online world as well as other interactions. Therefore, when online, staff will apply common sense to their dealing with students, and to behave and be seen to behave in a manner befitting their status as professionals in their field. Online, staff should ask themselves:

- Could anything they do be construed by a student as inappropriate?
- Could it be seen by another reasonable adult as inappropriate?

Staff should take reasonable precautions to protect their private and social lives from scrutiny from students online. It should also be noted that the rules and expectations about how St Mary's students treat one another and other people apply online as well as in other forms of communication.

Staff support/ training

It is the responsibility of school management to facilitate professional development and access in-service courses in the area of Child Protection, and to bring to the attention of all school personnel:

- Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools
- All school policies and protocols in the area of Child Protection.

It is the responsibility of school personnel to have a thorough working knowledge of the Guidelines and Policies adopted by the school, and to abide by them.

Vetting

School personnel including external coaches are vetted in accordance with statutory requirements.

Designated Liaison Person

The Designated Liaison Person of St Mary's College is the Principal. In his or her absence, the Designated Liaison Person is the Deputy Principal. A complaint against the Designated Liaison Person is made to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

Distribution & Review

This policy will be distributed to all members of staff, including volunteers, and subject to annual review by the Board of Management.

The standard Checklist for Annual Review (Appendix 2 of the 2023 Procedures) will be completed and retained with the BOM minutes.

Reviewed by the Board of Management 8/6/2026.

This policy is subject to annual review by the Board of Management.



Grainne Clear
Chairperson



Denis Murphy
Secretary