**Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Department of Education and Skills acknowledges the strong culture of child protection that exists in our schools and in particular the fact that schools take their responsibilities in relation to child protection and safety very seriously. It also recognises that child protection is a shared responsibility among all partners and that the Department has an important oversight and quality assurance role to play in ensuring that all our children receive the highest quality of care and protection in our schools. As part of the oversight and quality assurance role of the Department, the Inspectorate is developing a new model of inspection entitled the Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspection (CPSI) model. The CPSI model has a specific focus on the implementation of the Child Protection Guidelines for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017.

**CONTEXT**

The Children First Act 2015 has placed certain statutory obligations on all schools and on all registered teachers, who are referred to as mandated persons in the Act. Mandated persons are required to report concerns of child abuse directly to TUSLA. All sections of the Children First Act came into effect on 11 December 2017.

Children First National Guidelines outlines the new statutory obligations that apply to mandated persons and the new statutory obligations that apply to organisations such as schools under the Children First Act 2015. It 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 statutory obligations under the Children First Act 2015 operate side by side with the best practice, non-statutory obligations.

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017 provide direction and guidance to school authorities and to school personnel in relation to meeting their new 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. Circular 0081/2017 alerted schools to the publication of the guidelines and their responsibilities with regard to implementation.

Boards of management and principals of schools are responsible for fully implementing the C*hild Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017*. School patrons have an oversight and quality assurance role in the implementation of these procedures by boards of management. The patron has particular responsibilities when allegations of abuse are made against a school employee or against a member of the board of management.

The Department of Education and Skills is responsible for developing child protection procedures for schools. The Department has also put in place a range of oversight measures to quality assure those procedures.

The Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspection (CPSI) model is one element of these oversight measures.

The aims of the CPSI are to:

* monitor the extent to which the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017) are implemented in a sample of schools
* publish written reports on the implementation of Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017) in a sample of schools
* report to the Parents, Learners and Database (PLDS) section and to the Child Protection Oversight Group (CPOG) of the Department of Education and Skills on the extent to which the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017) are implemented in a sample of schools
* gather information to inform the development of child protection and safeguarding policy by the Department of Education and Skills and by other government departments and agencies involved in child protection

**EVALUATION FOCUS**

During the inspection visit the inspector(s) will establish if:

1. The board of **management** are fulfilling their **responsibilities** under the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017

* A DLP and a deputy DLP have been appointed in line with the procedures
* The board of management reports that it is aware of its responsibilities to provide information to all school personnel relevant to child protection and to provide training to all or some members of staff, if required
* All teachers report that they are aware of their responsibilities as a mandated person
* The board of management reports that it is aware of its responsibilities in relation to vetting of all school employees

1. The school’s child protection **policy** meets the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017

* A child safeguarding statement has been prepared in line with the procedures and is available to all relevant personnel
* A risk assessment has been conducted in line with the procedures

1. The school’s child protection **recording procedures** meet the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017)

* Correct record keeping procedures are in place for child protection matters

1. The school’s child protection **reporting procedures** meet the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017)

* All personnel have been made aware of the procedures to report allegations of abuse
* A child protection report is provided to each board of management meeting in line with the procedures
* The procedures to report allegations of abuse are implemented, if relevant
* Procedures are in place and, if relevant, are implemented for dealing with allegations against school personnel

1. **Curriculum provision** in the school meets the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017)

* Provision is made for SPHE and Stay Safe in Primary Schools and SPHE, including well-being and Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) in post primary schools.

**FEATURES OF THE EVALUATION**

Typically CPSIs are unannounced. The inspection is generally conducted by two inspectors and in-school activity takes up to two school days, which may be consecutive or non-consecutive.

During the initial meeting with the principal, at which the inspector(s) will explain the purpose of the visit, the inspector(s) will explain that they will require access to **all** of the documents and records that are required to be utilised and retained by the school under the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (*2017). The inspector(s) will also explain that section 3.4.6 of the Guidelines states that ‘to allow for the effective recording and tracking of relevant records and actions, all child protection case files and any parties referenced in such files shall be assigned a unique code or serial number by the DLP[[1]](#footnote-1).’ The inspector(s) will therefore request the principal to ensure that such identifiers have been assigned prior to making them available to the inspector. The inspector will clarify with the principal that no data relevant to child protection will removed from the school by inspectors.

**OVERVIEW OF INSPECTION ACTIVITIES: CPSI**

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| **DURING THE INSPECTION VISIT** | Inspectorate Activity | Request that the principal and chairperson complete and sign a school self-report form  Request class lists and list of school personnel from the principal |
| Review:   * Child protection records * Minutes of board meetings * Child safeguarding statement, including risk assessment * School plan for SPHE and Stay Safe (Primary schools) and SPHE and Well-being (Post-primary Schools) * School timetable (post-primary schools) and a sample of individual teacher’s timetables (primary schools) * A sample of monthly progress records (primary schools) |
| Hold meetings with:   * A sample of school personnel * The DLP * The deputy DLP * The chairperson of the board of management and other representatives, if available * A sample of learners * SPHE/RSE co-ordinator and/or principal |
| Provide oral feedback to the principal, chairperson and DLP (in cases where the DLP is not the principal) |
| School Activity | Principal prepares any records, documents and arranges meetings that are required |
| **AFTER THE INSPECTION VISIT** | Inspectorate Activity | Issue of draft report for factual verification and for school response  Publication of the final report on the Department website |
| School Activity | Response at factual verification and school response stage, if relevant |

1. In this context “parties” means any party whose identity, if disclosed, might lead to the identification of a child or a person against whom an allegation has been made [↑](#footnote-ref-1)