CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Leenane National School

Leenane, Co. Galway | H91 C6H9

1. Introduction and Rationale

Leenane National School is committed to providing a safe, supportive and secure environment in which every child is protected from harm and is enabled to develop, learn and participate fully in school life.

This policy sets out the school's local arrangements for child protection and safeguarding. It must be read and implemented in conjunction with the Department of Education and Youth's Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025, Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 and the Addendum to Children First (2025), together with relevant legislation and Department guidance.

The Department's Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025 are the governing procedures for the school. The school shall adopt and implement those procedures without modification. This policy does not replace or reproduce the Department's procedures; it explains how Leenane National School will implement them in practice.

The previous school policy contained references to the 2011/2017 procedures and to historical arrangements which are no longer current. Those references have been removed or replaced in this updated policy.

2. Legislative and Policy Framework

This policy is informed by, and shall be read alongside, the following:

- Children First Act 2015.
- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017.
- Addendum to Children First National Guidance (2025).
- Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025.
- Child Care Act 1991, as amended.
- Education Act 1998 and Education Welfare Act 2000, as relevant.
- Data Protection Acts 1988–2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- Criminal Justice Act 1991 and other relevant legislation.
- Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences Against Children and Vulnerable

Persons) Act 2012.
● Relevant Department of Education and Youth circulars and guidance on Garda vetting, recruitment, safeguarding and school operation.
● Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour and the school's Code of Behaviour.

3. Relationship with the Child Safeguarding Statement

The school maintains a Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment using the Department's CSS1 template. The CSS1 is a statutory safeguarding document and forms the central statement of the school's safeguarding arrangements.

This policy supports the implementation of the CSS1. The CSS1 and Risk Assessment identify potential risks of harm associated with school activities and the measures in place to mitigate those risks. The Board of Management reviews the Child Safeguarding Statement annually and following a material change, in accordance with the 2025 Procedures.

The CSS1, the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025 and this policy shall be made accessible to school personnel and parents/guardians as required.

4. Child Protection Principles

● The protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance.
● The safety and well-being of a child takes priority over concerns about adults against whom an allegation may be made.
● All school personnel have a responsibility to be alert to signs of abuse and neglect and to report concerns without delay in accordance with the procedures.
● All reasonable grounds for concern must be acted upon; uncertainty must not become a reason for inaction.
● Registered teachers and other mandated persons must fulfil their statutory reporting responsibilities under the Children First Act 2015.
● Information relating to child protection is shared only on a need-to-know basis and in accordance with the 2025 Procedures and data protection law.
● The school will work openly and respectfully with children, parents/guardians and statutory agencies while maintaining the confidentiality required in child protection matters.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Board of Management

● Adopts and implements the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025 without modification.
● Ensures, as far as practicable, that children are safe from harm while attending school or participating in school activities.
● Appoints a DLP and DDLP and ensures they receive appropriate training.
● Ensures the school has a Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment and reviews it annually and following a material change.

- Ensures all school personnel are familiar with the procedures and receive appropriate child protection training, with records retained.
- Provides oversight through the Principal's Child Protection Oversight Report (CPOR) at ordinary Board meetings in accordance with Chapter 12 of the 2025 Procedures.
- Ensures appropriate recruitment, Garda vetting and safeguarding arrangements are in place.
- Ensures child protection records are maintained securely and that relevant oversight documentation is retained.

5.2 Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

The Board has appointed James Fallon as Designated Liaison Person (DLP), with formal confirmation by the Board in the school's current CSS1.

- Acts as the school's principal point of contact with Tusla, An Garda Síochána and other relevant agencies in relation to child protection concerns and allegations.
- Receives concerns and allegations from school personnel and ensures they are dealt with in accordance with the 2025 Procedures.
- Makes reports to Tusla where required and ensures mandated reporting obligations are addressed.
- Keeps appropriate records and maintains child protection case files in accordance with Chapter 8
- Maintains the school's list of mandated persons and supports staff familiarisation and training.
- Provides the Principal's CPOR to the Board in accordance with Chapter 12.

5.3 Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLP)

The Board has appointed Maria Carroll as Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLP), subject to formal confirmation by the Board in the current CSS1. The DDLP acts in the DLP's absence and supports the DLP in implementing the procedures.

5.4 All School Personnel

- Must familiarise themselves with the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025, Children First National Guidance 2017 and the school's CSS.
- Must report, without delay, any allegation, suspicion or concern that a child may have been abused or neglected, is being abused or neglected, or is at risk of abuse or neglect, to the DLP.
- Must comply with their statutory obligations where they are a mandated person.
- Must maintain confidentiality and not discuss concerns except with persons who have a legitimate role.
- Must record information accurately, factually and promptly where required.
- Must cooperate with the DLP, Tusla, An Garda Síochána and the Board as appropriate.

6. Recognition of Child Abuse and Neglect

The four categories of child abuse are neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. School personnel must familiarise themselves with the definitions, signs and indicators in Chapter 2 of

the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025.

A pattern of indicators may be more significant than an isolated indicator. School personnel should remain alert to changes in presentation, attendance, behaviour, physical condition, emotional wellbeing or disclosures. They should not attempt to investigate or determine whether abuse has occurred.

Where a child discloses information, the adult should listen carefully, remain calm, avoid leading or suggestive questions, avoid promises of secrecy, explain that information may need to be shared to keep the child safe, record the disclosure accurately and report it to the DLP without delay.

7. Responding to Disclosures

- Listen and take the child seriously.
- Do not promise to keep the information secret.
- Do not ask leading questions or seek detailed information beyond what is necessary to understand the immediate concern.
- Do not express disbelief, shock or judgement.
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in speaking to an adult.
- Explain, in an age-appropriate manner, that the information may need to be shared with people who can help keep them safe.
- Make a contemporaneous factual record, including the child's own words where possible.
- Report the matter to the DLP without delay.

8. Reporting Concerns and Mandated Reporting

The school will follow Chapters 4, 5 and 6 of the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025 for all reporting. Where there are reasonable grounds for concern, the matter shall be reported to Tusla without delay. The DLP will follow the prescribed reporting routes and use the Tusla reporting arrangements in operation.

All registered teachers are mandated persons under the Children First Act 2015. Other members of school personnel may also be mandated persons where specified by the Act. The school maintains an up-to-date list of mandated persons.

A mandated person who has a concern at or above the threshold for a mandated report must fulfil their statutory obligations. The DLP will support the mandated person in accordance with the 2025 Procedures. A mandated person does not discharge their statutory obligation merely by passing a concern to a non-mandated person.

Where a concern does not meet the threshold for a mandated report but requires reporting as a reasonable concern, the school will follow the reporting provisions in the 2025 Procedures.

Where there is an immediate and serious risk to a child and Tusla cannot be contacted, An Garda Síochána will be contacted in accordance with the procedures.

9. Retrospective Abuse Allegations

The 2025 Procedures contain specific requirements for retrospective abuse allegations. A retrospective allegation is a disclosure by an adult concerning abuse experienced during childhood. Such a disclosure must be treated seriously and dealt with in accordance with Chapter 3 of the 2025 Procedures.

- The member of school personnel receiving the disclosure will respond with tact and sensitivity.

- The person will not investigate the allegation or conduct an interview.
- The matter will be referred to the DLP without delay.
- The DLP will follow the reporting requirements of the 2025 Procedures, including consideration of whether any child may currently be at risk.
- Relevant information will be recorded and retained securely.

10. Allegations or Suspicions Regarding School Personnel

Where an allegation or suspicion of child abuse or neglect concerns a member of school personnel, the school will follow Chapter 7 of the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025. The DLP is responsible for the child protection reporting function, while the Board of Management, as employer, is responsible for the employment/administrative aspects.

The safety of children is the first priority. Any protective measures must be proportionate and consistent with the 2025 Procedures. Where the allegation concerns the DLP, the alternative reporting arrangements in the 2025 Procedures will apply.

The school will not conduct its own investigation into an allegation where the statutory authorities are responsible for investigating it. The rights of the child and the rights of the member of school personnel will both be respected.

11. Communication with Parents/Guardians

The DLP will follow the 2025 Procedures when deciding whether and when a parent/carer should be informed that a report concerning their child is being made. A parent/carer will not be informed where doing so would place the child at further risk or would otherwise be contrary to the procedures. Where a decision is made not to inform a parent/carer, the decision and the reasons will be recorded as required.

The school will use appropriate communication and interpretation supports where required so that parents/guardians can understand relevant safeguarding information, while ensuring that confidential child protection information is shared only in accordance with the procedures.

12. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

The school will comply with Chapter 8 of the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025. Child protection records are maintained separately from ordinary pupil records and are subject to strict access controls.

● Records must be factual, accurate, contemporaneous where practicable and free from speculation.

● Original records must be retained and protected from alteration.
● Child protection cases will have a unique case reference in accordance with the Department's requirements.
● Records will be stored securely with access restricted to those with a legitimate role.
● Reports and correspondence will be retained in accordance with the Department's requirements and applicable data protection law.
● Information is shared on a need-to-know basis only.
● Where information is provided to the Board for oversight, it will be anonymised/redacted as required. The previous policy's reference to identifying children solely by school-register number is replaced by the 2025 requirements on unique case references and anonymisation/redaction. Staff should not create their own parallel systems of identifying codes.

13. Board of Management Oversight – CPOR

At every ordinary Board meeting, the Principal/DLP will present the Child Protection Oversight Report (CPOR) in accordance with Chapter 12 of the 2025 Procedures. The CPOR will address the four required headings and will contain the information required by the Department.

● Allegations of abuse made against members of school personnel.
● Other child protection concerns in respect of students.
● Child protection concerns arising from alleged bullying behaviour amongst students.
● Summary data in respect of reporting.

Where cases are presented for oversight, the Board will be provided with relevant documentation in the manner required by the 2025 Procedures, with appropriate anonymisation and redaction. The Board will record its oversight in its minutes without including unnecessary identifying details.

The school will comply with the 2025 requirements regarding the circumstances in which an in-person Board meeting is required for presentation of a CPOR.

14. Child Safeguarding Requirements and Risk Management

The school's CSS1 Risk Assessment identifies the potential for harm associated with school activities and the procedures used to mitigate those risks. The following local safeguarding arrangements are also in place.

Supervision

Pupils are supervised during arrival, breaks, dismissal and school activities in accordance with the school's Supervision arrangements. Children are not permitted to leave the school premises during the school day without an agreed and authorised arrangement.

One-to-one teaching and support

One-to-one teaching may be used where it is in the child's best interests. The school will use open and observable environments wherever practicable. Classroom doors have glass panels. In-class support is preferred where appropriate. Staff maintain professional boundaries at all times.

SNA support and intimate care

SNAs work under the direction of the class teacher and in accordance with their role. Intimate care is managed under the school's Intimate Care arrangements, respecting the child's dignity, privacy and safety.

PE, swimming and changing

Pupils are encouraged to dress and undress independently. Where assistance is required, it will be provided in accordance with the school's arrangements and with appropriate safeguarding and supervision. Staff will not undertake unnecessary personal care.

Visitors and external personnel

Visitors, guest speakers, coaches, contractors and other external personnel are managed in accordance with school visitor arrangements, Garda vetting requirements where applicable and the Child Protection Procedures 2025. External personnel are not left unsupervised with children unless the required safeguarding checks and school arrangements permit this.

School transport and off-site activities

School tours, swimming, sporting activities, church activities and other off-site activities are planned with appropriate supervision and safeguarding arrangements. Transport arrangements are subject to the school's risk assessment and agreed supervision arrangements.

Digital and online safeguarding

The school follows its Acceptable Use Policy and relevant digital safeguarding arrangements. Approved platforms are used where practicable. Online communication with pupils must be professional, transparent and consistent with school policy. Staff will not arrange inappropriate private communication or unsupervised one-to-one online meetings with pupils.

Photography and images

Images of pupils are created, stored and shared only in accordance with school consent, data protection and digital safeguarding arrangements.

Attendance

Attendance is monitored in accordance with the school's Attendance Policy. Persistent or unexplained absence may be considered alongside other indicators of welfare or neglect and will be addressed through the appropriate school and statutory procedures.

Peer abuse and harmful behaviour

Where there are concerns that one child may have harmed another, the DLP will consider whether the matter is a child protection concern. Bullying behaviour is addressed under Bí Cineálta. Where the behaviour is sexualised, abusive or otherwise meets the threshold for child protection reporting, the 2025 Procedures will be followed.

15. Curriculum and Preventative Education

The school provides age-appropriate preventative education through the SPHE curriculum, including Stay Safe, RSE and other relevant wellbeing and personal safety learning. Teaching is adapted to pupils' age, developmental level and additional educational needs. The school will ensure that children know that they can speak to trusted adults if they are worried about something and will foster a culture where children are listened to and treated with respect.

16. Recruitment, Garda Vetting and Volunteers

The school follows Chapter 10 of the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025 and relevant Department of Education and Youth requirements for recruitment and Garda vetting.

- Appropriate vetting is completed before a person undertakes relevant work with children.
- The school follows the Department's requirements for the recruitment and appointment of staff.
- Volunteers, student teachers, work-experience participants, coaches and other relevant persons are subject to appropriate safeguarding checks and supervision.
- The school maintains appropriate records of vetting and recruitment checks.

17. Training, Induction and Awareness

The Board of Management shall ensure that all school personnel receive appropriate child protection training and that records of attendance are maintained. Training for all school personnel, and DLP/DDLP training, should be refreshed at a minimum every three years in accordance with Chapter 11 of the 2025 Procedures.

- All new school personnel, including temporary staff and substitutes, are made aware of the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025, the Child Safeguarding Statement and their responsibilities.
- The DLP and DDLP complete role-specific training and maintain records.
- Board members are supported to understand their child safeguarding oversight responsibilities.
- Training records are maintained securely by the school.

18. Visitors, Coaches, Contractors and School Personnel

Visitors and external personnel must follow the school's sign-in and safeguarding arrangements. Where a person is working directly with children, the school will determine whether Garda vetting or other safeguarding checks are required. The Principal will ensure that the level of supervision is appropriate to the activity and the person's role.

19. Professional Conduct and Physical Contact

Physical contact between school personnel and pupils should be appropriate to the child's needs, age and developmental stage, and should be open, proportionate and not secretive. Staff must maintain appropriate professional boundaries.

- No physical punishment.
- No sexualised or suggestive behaviour or comments.
- No inappropriate language or conduct.
- No use or display of sexually explicit material.
- No unnecessary personal care where a child can reasonably do something independently.

20. Emergency Situations

Where a child is in immediate danger, the school will take immediate steps to protect the child and contact the appropriate emergency service or An Garda Síochána where required. The DLP will then ensure that the child protection reporting requirements are followed and that all relevant actions are recorded.

21. Child Protection Case Files

The school will maintain dedicated child protection case files in accordance with the Department's 2025 procedures. The file will contain the original, unaltered records relevant to the case and will be securely maintained. The school will use the Department's Child Protection Case File Booklet and associated templates where required.

22. Review and Implementation

This policy will be reviewed as necessary to ensure continuing alignment with the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025, relevant legislation and Department guidance. The Board will review the Child Safeguarding Statement annually and following a material change, using the Department's mandatory review checklist and notification template.

The Board will ensure that any actions arising from the review are assigned, completed and recorded.

This policy should be read alongside the school's current Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment, Code of Behaviour, Bí Cineálta Policy, Attendance Policy, Supervision Policy, Intimate Care Policy, Administration of Medication Policy, Acceptable Use Policy and other relevant school policies.

23. Publication and Availability

The school's Child Safeguarding Statement will be displayed and made available in accordance with the 2025 Procedures. This policy and the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025 will be accessible to school personnel and made available to parents/guardians on request. The school website may be used to provide access to the Department procedures and relevant safeguarding information.

24. Adoption

Policy adopted by Board of Management	_____
Date of Board meeting	_____
Signed: Chairperson	_____
Signed: Principal	_____
Date for review	_____

Appendix A – Key Reporting Reminder for Staff

If you receive an allegation, disclosure or have a suspicion that a child may have been abused or neglected, is being abused or neglected, or is at risk of abuse or neglect:

- Report the matter to the DLP without delay.
- If the DLP is unavailable, report to the DDLP in accordance with the school's arrangements.
- If you are a mandated person, consider and fulfil your own mandated reporting obligations.
- Do not investigate the concern yourself.
- Do not promise confidentiality.
- Record relevant facts accurately and promptly.
- Do not discuss the matter with colleagues or others who do not have a legitimate role.
- In an emergency, take immediate steps to protect the child and contact emergency services/An Garda Síochána as required.

Appendix B – Documents and Records to be Maintained

- Current Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment (CSS1).
- Checklist for Review of the Child Safeguarding Statement.
- Notification regarding the Board of Management's review of the Child Safeguarding Statement.
- Current DLP/DDLP details and list of mandated persons.
- Child protection training records.
- Child Protection Case Files and relevant Department templates.
- Child Protection Oversight Reports and associated Board oversight records.
- Garda vetting and relevant recruitment/safeguarding records.
- Records required under the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025.