

West Cork Sudbury School Child Safeguarding Statement 2022/23

Declaration of Guiding Principles

West Cork Sudbury School (WCSS) is an Independent School registered with Tusla, providing a self-directed learning environment to students from 5 to 18 years old.

WCSS is committed to safeguarding the well-being of all children and young people whom our staff and visitors come in contact with regardless of race, ability, ethnicity, or sexual orientation¹. We are committed to promoting the rights of the child to be protected, be listened to, consulted and have their own views taken into consideration.

In accordance with the requirements of the

- Children First Act 2015²,
- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017³ (Children First Guidlines),
- Tusla Guidance on the preparation of Child Safeguarding Statements⁴,

the Board of Management of WCSS has agreed to the Child Safeguarding Statement set out in this document.

- 1. The Board of Management has adopted and will fully implement the Children's First Guidelines as part of this overall Child Safeguarding Statement.
- 2. The Board of Management has appointed Kathrin Bierwirth ("named person") to be responsible for leading the development of the guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures and for ensuring that policies and procedures are consistent with best practice as detailed in Tusla's <u>Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practise</u>. They liaise with all key workers and volunteers who have relevant roles and responsibilities.
- 3. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Kathrin Bierwirth: 089 976 5654 **or** office@westcorksudburyschool.ie
- 4. The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Catherine Scroope: 085 179 8610 **or** catherine@westcorksudburyschool.ie

The above named DLP will act as point of contact and disclosure where it is a legal requirement to inform An Garda Siochana if there is information regarding certain offences under the *Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012*⁵.

The Board of Management recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and must be reflected in all of WCSS's policies, procedures,

¹ WCSS's Diversity & Inclusion Policy

² https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/36/enacted/en/html

³ https://bit.ly/CFGuide2017

⁴ https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/4214-TUSLA Guidance on Developing a CSS LR.PDF

⁵ https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2012/act/24/enacted/en/html

practices and activities. In its policies, procedures, practices and activities, WCSS will adhere to the following principles of best practice in child protection and welfare. Our guiding principles apply to everyone in our organisation.

WCSS will...

- recognise that the protection and welfare of children and young people is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations;
- ensure that all children and young people have an equal right to attend a service that respects them as individuals and encourages them to reach their potential, regardless of their backgrounds⁶;
- fully comply with its statutory obligations under the Children First Act 2015 and other relevant legislation relating to the protection and welfare of children;
- Fully cooperate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters;
- adopt safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and young people and protect staff from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect;
- fully commit to upholding the rights of every child and young person who attends our service, including the rights to be protected, be listened to, consulted and have their own views taken into consideration;
- develop a practice of openness with parents and encourage parental involvement in learning about the practises and processes of WCSS; and
- fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.

WCSS will also adhere to the above principles in relation to any staff or student with an individual vulnerability.

The following procedures/measures are in place:

- In relation to any member of staff who is the subject of any investigation (howsoever described) in respect of any act, omission or circumstance in respect of a child and young person attending WCSS, the school adheres to the relevant procedures set out in WCSS's Child Protection Policy and to the relevant agreed disciplinary procedures for staff.
- In relation to the selection of staff and their suitability to work with children and young people, WCSS adheres to the statutory vetting requirements of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016⁷ and to the wider duty of care guidance set out in relevant information published by Tusla⁸.

⁶ WCSS's Diversity & Inclusion Policy

https://vetting.garda.ie/

^{8 &}lt;u>https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/organisations/garda-vetting/</u>

- In relation to the provision of information and, where necessary, instruction and training, to staff in respect of the identification of the occurrence of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015), WCSS
 - has provided each member of staff with a copy of the WCSS's Child Safeguarding Statement;
 - ensures all new staff are provided with a copy of the WCSS's Child Safeguarding Statement;
 - o requires staff to avail of relevant training⁹;
 - requires the Board of Management members to avail of relevant training (see above);

The Board of Management maintains records of all staff and Board of Management member training regarding Child Protection.

In addition:

- In relation to reporting of child protection concerns to Tusla, all school staff are required to adhere to the procedures set out in <u>WCSS's Child Protection Policy</u>;
- In relation to reporting of child protection concerns to Tusla, all mandated persons are required to adhere to Tusla's *A guide for the reporting of child protection and welfare concerns*¹⁰, including those in relation to mandated reporting under the Children First Act 2015.
- WCSS's Board of Management has appointed the above named DLP as the "relevant person" (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) to be the first point of contact in respect of the child safeguarding statement.
- All staff employed by WCSS are considered mandated persons under the Children First Act 2015.
- In accordance with the Children First Act 2015, the Board of Management has carried
 out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child or young person while attending
 WCSS or participating in school activities. Please find below a written assessment
 setting out the areas of risk identified and WCSS's procedures for managing those risks
 (Child Protection Risk Assessment).
- The various procedures referred to in this statement will be made available on request.

This statement has been published on WCSS's website and has been provided to all members of the school.

It is readily accessible to parents and guardians on request. A copy of this statement will be made available to Tusla if requested.

Julia Juliy Johnson

TUSLA's Children First E-Learning Programme: https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-e-learning-programme/
TUSLA's Mandated Person eLearning Module:

https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/mandated-persons/mandated-person-role-and-responsibilities-elearning-module/

https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/4214-TUSLA Guide to Reporters Guide A4 v3.pdf

Child Protection Risk Assessment

This Risk Assessment is in accordance with the <u>Children First Act 2015</u> and considers the potential for harm to children whilst in the care of West Cork Sudbury School (WCSS). All staff, both paid and volunteers, will be Garda Vetted in accordance with the relevant Vetting bureau requirements. All staff, paid and volunteers, are trained in <u>Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017.</u>

The definition of harm as set out in the Children First Act 2015, p. 6 states:

- "[...] "harm" means, in relation to a child—
- (a) assault, ill-treatment or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects or is likely to seriously affect the child's health, development or welfare, or
- (b) sexual abuse of the child, whether caused by a single act, omission or circumstance or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances, or otherwise; [...]."

For more details on Definitions of Child Abuse, please see Apendix A in WCSS's Child Protection Policy.

Risk identified	Likelihood of Harm Happening: High(H); Medium(M); Low(L)	Required Policy, Guidance & Procedure document	Procedure in place to manage identified risk	Impact of Risk	Risk Rating H; M; L
Harm not being recognised and/or not reported	M	- Child Protection Policy - Child Protection Training/Mandated Person Training - Homegroups - Incident Log	 Use of homegroups and regular homegroup staff check-ins to ensure harm is recognised; Appointment of DLP, deputy DLP, named person; Ongoing review of and training of all staff in child protection procedures and policy; An incident log is kept on G-Drive to ensure concerns and actions are recorded and patterns of behaviour can be recognised before (further) harm is caused. 	Unrecognised harm; long-term impacts.	H
Harm caused by - staff (including employees and volunteers) to child - visitor to child	L	- Child Protection Policy - Code of Conduct - Homegroups - Yearly Consent Workshop Yearly workshops addressing the responsible use of Internet for students	- Staff have to sign up to WCSS's Code of Conduct; - New staff undergo two reviews within 3 months of their probationary period; - At the end of the probationary period, staff and existing students evaluate whether they feel a new staff is a threat or an addition to the school community; - Disciplinary Procedure for staff outlined in WCSS's Child Protection Policy.	For specific harm see below; long-term impacts.	M

		and parents including	- Visitors are assigned a staff for the		
		information on Online	duration of their visit;		
		Safety from Tusla's	- Sufficient staffing levels with clear		
		Child Safeguarding	roles;		
		guide - Appendix A	- Regular homegroup staff check-ins with		
		- WCSS Parent, Staff,	students and parents;		
		Student Meeting	- Use of conflict resolution and the		
		- WCSS's Record of	school's agreements to uphold an		
		Agreement	atmosphere of respect and safety.		
		- WCSS Conflict			
		Resolution Practises			
		- Visitors log			
		- WCSS's Recruitment			
		<u>Policy</u>			
		- WCSS's Review			
		<u>Policy</u>			
		- <u>Grievance</u>			
		Procedure: Students			
		- Grievance Procedure			
		<u>against Staff</u>			
		- Child Protection	- Sufficient staffing levels with clear		
		Policy including	roles;		
		definition of child on	- Use of homegroups and regular	(Unrecognised)	
Harm caused		child abuse;	homegroup staff check-ins with students	Physical harm,	
- peer to peer	М	- <u>Homegroups</u> ;	and parents to ensure friction and	emotional and	M/H
poor to poor		- Incident Log;	worries are recognised and addressed	mental harm;	,
		- WCSS's Intimate	before harm is caused;	short- and	
		Conduct Policy	- Weekly student feedback is reviewed	long-term impacts.	
		- Conflict Resolution	during staff meeting where any		
		<u>Practises</u>	observations are shared with all staff and		

- Mc	orning Circles	if needed this may include the planning	
- <u>W(</u>	CSS's Record of	and provision of targeted work with those	
Agre	<u>eement</u>	identified as vulnerable or being a	
- <u>At</u>	Home Pause	potential risk to others through	
- Yea	arly Consent	homegroup staff and implementation of	
Wor	kshop	support plans;	
- Yea	arly workshops	- Before and during a new student's Test	
add	ressing the	Run WCSS works closely with the family	
resp	onsible use of	to identify any areas of vulnerability	
Inte	rnet for students	and/or risk. Where necessary WCSS	
and	parents including	develops a support plan in collaboration	
info	rmation on Online	with the family;	
Safe	ety from Tusla's	- At the end of a new student's test run	
Chil	d Safeguarding	(6-8 weeks), staff and existing students	
guic	<u>le</u> - Appendix A	evaluate whether they feel a new student	
- <u>Pa</u>	rent, Staff,	is a threat or an addition to the school	
<u>Stur</u>	dent Meeting	community;	
Poli	с <u>у</u>	- An incident log is kept on G-Drive to	
- <u>Ac</u>	ceptable Use	ensure concerns and actions are	
<u>Poli</u>	cy - ICT	recorded and patterns of behaviour can	
- <u>An</u>	ti-Bullying Policy	be recognise before (further) harm is	
<u>Stur</u>	<u>dents</u>	caused;	
- <u>Gr</u>	<u>ievance</u>	- WCSS encourages students to use the	
Proc	cedure: Students	tools of Transformative Practise (Conflict	
		Resolution) to deal with conflict as soon	
		as it arises to prevent built up and	
		escalation;	
		- Students can raise concerns through	
		their homegroup staff, school meeting,	

TP and ACT as well as informal to any
staff and through their parents;
- Wherever appropriate, any issues will be
checked in with the parent(s)/guardian.
- Daily Morning Circles are held in which
the following topics (amongst others) are
discussed in a digestible format in
addition to workshops throughout the
year: Community values and effects of
Bullying & Harassment, the Practise of
Consent, the Record of Agreement, risks
of Social Media Use;
- WCSS's students sign up to WCSS's
Record of Agreements which states:
 Everyone has the right to be free from harm, harassment and discrimination. Everyone is free and equal, with their own thoughts and ideas and will be treated the same. Everyone has the right to self determination and to follow their own path, so long as this does not harm anyone or keep others from doing the same. Everyone is asked to respect and accept other people's boundaries, and has the right to respect and accept their own.

All members of the school	
community are responsible for	
protecting the atmosphere of the	
school which is one of freedom,	
trust, and respect. Our	
agreements are there to make	
sure everyone can exist freely	
with consideration to others.	
- WCSS's Record of Agreements includes	
the following Agreements:	
School agreements apply online	
[];	
No locking doors when in rooms	
[];	
People are to be mindful of their	
language in walk through areas,	
and in all spaces make sure that	
people are comfortable with the	
topic of conversation. This is	
especially true for topics that are	
being unkind to yourself or others,	
or could trigger negative past	
experiences for other people.	
All members of the school	
community (staff and students)	
must uphold and respect the	
policies and procedures of the	
school.	
At home pause: These are needed	
where safety is of concern, and if	

			staff are not able to deal with a situation on a day. This means they might be subjective. An at home pause gives time to evaluate a situation before (further) harm is caused. - WCSS's Intimate Conduct Policy states that no one is permitted to engage in sexual activities or behaviour whether consensual or not, nor to touch any school member's intimate areas and everyone is to take consideration of what is appropriate conversation, jokes and behaviour.		
Harm caused by lack of supervision	L	- Code of Conduct - WCSS's Record of Agreements - Grounds Check Protocol - WCSS Substance Policy - WCSS Child Protection Policy	 Sufficient staffing levels with clear roles; Staff make regular rounds to cover WCSS's outdoor learning spaces; Students and staff have to accomplish safety certs to use tools, appliances and equipment; Smoking, Alcohol, illegal drugs and other mind altering substances are prohibited; Disciplinary Procedure for staff outlined in WCSS's Child Protection Policy. 	Physical harm, emotional and mental harm; short-term impacts.	L/M
Harm caused on day trips	M	- <u>WCSS's Day Trip</u> <u>Policy</u>	- Please see WCSS's Day Trip Policy for details.	(Unrecognised) Physical harm, emotional and mental harm;	Н

				short- and long-term impacts.	
Harm caused on overnight trips/activities	n/a	WCSS does not facilitate overnight trips.	WCSS does not feel confident that dividing students by gender regarding sleeping arrangement safeguards for same sex abuse. Therefore WCSS does not facilitate overnight activities at present. The Risk Assessment will be updated ahead of time, if this should change.	(Unrecognised) Physical harm, emotional and mental harm; short- and long-term impacts.	Н
Harm caused by a member of staff by failing to keep up with their responsibilities	L	- Staff have access to a Handbook and Guide with relevant procedures	- Sufficient staffing levels with clear roles; - Weekly staff meetings; - Weekly school meetings; - Daily debriefs; - Use of Opening and Closing checklists.	Students missing out on activities; Funding application deadlines missed; Miscommunication s with families and the general public; Hygiene and pest control concerns; short-term impacts.	L
Abuse – sexual	М	- Child Protection Policy - Child Protection Training/Mandated Person Training - WCSS's Code of Conduct	- Staff are trained in child protection and are aware of protocols to identify behaviour(s) of concern and how to act on disclosures from young people; - All staff are fully Garda Vetted; - Staff have to sign up to WCSS's Code of Conduct;	Unrecognised physical, emotional and mental harm; long-term impacts.	Н

		- Yearly Consent	- WCSS's Intimate Conduct Policy states		
		Workshop	that no one is permitted to engage in		
		- WCSS's Record of	sexual activities or behaviour whether		
		Agreement	consensual or not, nor to touch any		
		- WCSS's Recruitment	school member's intimate areas and		
		Policy	everyone is to take consideration of what		
		- WCSS's Intimate	is appropriate conversation, jokes and		
		Conduct Policy	behaviour;		
		- <u>Grievance</u>	- Disciplinary Procedure for staff outlined		
		Procedure: Students	in WCSS's Child Protection Policy.		
		- <u>Grievance Procedure</u>			
		against Staff			
Abuse - physical	М	- Child Protection Policy - Child Protection Training/Mandated Person Training - Code of Conduct - Consent Workshop - Incident Log - WCSS's Record of Agreement - WCSS's Recruitment Policy - Grievance Procedure: Students - Grievance Procedure against Staff	- Staff are trained in child protection and are aware of protocols to identify behaviour(s) of concern and how to act on disclosures from young people; - All staff are fully Garda Vetted; - Staff have to sign up to WCSS's Code of Conduct; - A non-negotiable agreement that is in the preface to WCSS's Record of Agreements, which students and staff have to sign up for to become a member of WCSS, states that everyone has the right to be free from harm, harassment and discrimination An incident log is kept on G-Drive to ensure concerns and actions are recorded and patterns of behaviour can	Unrecognised physical harm; short- and long-term impacts.	Н

			be recognise before (further) harm is caused; - An "At Home Pause" will be given to students who break any agreements regarding violence and threatening behaviour(s). They can only return when staff are confident that the incident can be addressed appropriately; - Disciplinary Procedure for staff outline in WCSS's Child Protection Policy.		
Self-harm – mental health	Н	- Child Protection Policy - Child Protection Training/Mandated Person Training - Code of Conduct - WCSS's Recruitment Policy - Incident Log - Grievance Procedure: Students - Grievance Procedure against Staff	- Staff are trained in child protection and are trained to recognise behaviour(s) of concern; - Staff have to sign up to WCSS's Code of Conduct; - The school will offer mental health support, workshops and aid with access to counselling where needed; - An incident log is kept on G-Drive to ensure concerns and actions are recorded and patterns of behaviour can be recognise before (further) harm is caused; - An "At home Pause" will be given to students who break any agreements regarding bullying. They can only return when staff are confident that the incident can be addressed appropriately; - Disciplinary Procedure for staff outline in WCSS's Child Protection Policy.	Unrecognised physical, emotional and mental harm; long-term impacts.	М

Bullying & Discrimination	H	- Child Protection Policy - Child Protection training - Code of Conduct - Anti-Bullying Policy Students - Child Protection Training/Mandated Person Training - WCSS's Record of Agreement Yearly workshops addressing the responsible use of Internet for students and parents including information on Online Safety from Tusla's Child Safeguarding guide - Appendix A - Incident Log - Acceptable Use Policy - ICT - WCSS's Diversity & Inclusion Policy - WCSS's Recruitment Policy - Grievance Procedure: Students	- Students and Staff are aware of WCSS's Anti-Bullying Policy; - Staff have to sign up to WCSS's Code of Conduct; - The school's conflict resolution practises which are based on Transformative Justice whereby all aggrieved parties are able to voice and settle disputes; - An incident log is kept on G-Drive to ensure concerns and actions are recorded and patterns of behaviour can be recognise before (further) harm is caused; - An "At home Pause" will be given to students who break any agreements regarding bullying. They can only return when staff are confident that the incident can be addressed appropriately; - Disciplinary Procedure for staff outline in WCSS's Child Protection Policy.	Mental and physical impacts of bullying; long-term impacts.	M/H
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Access to ICT – especially Cyberbullying and Grooming	Н	- Grievance Procedure: Parents - Child Protection Policy - Child Protection Training/Mandated Person Training - Code of Conduct - Tech Agreements in Record of Agreements - Anti-Bullying Policy Students Yearly workshops addressing the responsible use of Internet for students and parents including information on Online Safety from Tusla's Child Safeguarding guide - Appendix A - Acceptable Use Policy - ICT - WCSS's Recruitment Policy - Grievance Procedure: Students - Grievance Procedure: Parents	- All staff are fully Garda Vetted; - Staff have to sign up to WCSS's Code of Conduct; - Students will be required to attend yearly workshops addressing the responsible use of the Internet/Internet Safety; - WCSS's Acceptable Use Policy - ICT is reviewed together with parents and students; - Fire wall and content filter installed - school WiFi; - Parents sign an agreement to install age appropriate protective software on their child's devices; - Parents are asked to attend a yearly workshop addressing the responsible use of ICT/Internet Safety.	Mental and potential physical risks of grooming; short- and long-term impacts.	M/H
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Personal Records being lost/leaked/taken and unwanted images/footage taken	L	- GDPR - Child Protection Policy - Anti-Bullying Policy - WCSS's Record of Agreements - WCSS Consent Form	 All staff are Fully Garda Vetted; Sensitive information is stored on a separate G-Drive account that only the GDPR officer has access to and can give access to on a need to know basis; School's Office laptop has an Office account which is password protected; Old Personal documentation is shredded/deleted; Cabinets with sensitive records are password protected/locked; Families give or deny consent to photos being taken of their children. WCSS's staff consults students before sharing any of their images; Photos of other students cannot be taken by another student or staff without consent; The school phone is password protected; EMail access on portable devices requires a device pin code or similar; Only the school phone or similar devices are to be used to take pictures of activities if consented by students. 	Potential impact on Mental Health due to grooming, bullying, stalking, harassment; long-term impacts.	M
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Policy Review & Ratification

This document was prepared on: 01/09/2022 by: Kathrin Bierwirth (DLP), Catherine Scroope (Deputy DLP) in liaison with staff and WCSS's Board of Management.

This policy is due for review at the end of the Academic Year: 2023/2024.

Ratified by the Board of Management on 24/08/2022.

Chairperson:				
Secretary:				