



Finn Valley College

Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment

Child Safeguarding Statement – Finn Valley College

Finn Valley College is a post-primary school providing post-primary education to pupils from First Year to Leaving Certificate Year and to PLC students.

In accordance with the requirements of the [Children First Act 2015](#), [Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017](#), [the Addendum to Children First \(2019\)](#), the [Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools \(revised 2023\)](#) and [Tusla Guidance on the preparation of Child Safeguarding Statements](#), the Board of Management of Finn Valley College has agreed the Child Safeguarding Statement set out in this document.

1. The Board of Management has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017 as part of this overall Child Safeguarding Statement
2. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Mr Séan Mc Fadden (Principal)
3. The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Ms Kathleen Boland (Deputy Principal)
4. The Relevant Person is Mr Séan Mc Fadden
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 the school's policies, procedures, practices and activities. In its policies, procedures, practices and activities, the school will adhere to the following principles of best practice in child protection and welfare:

The school will:

- recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations;
- 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 co-operate 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 protect workers from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect;
- develop a practice of openness with parents and encourage parental involvement in the education of their children; and

- fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.

The school will also adhere to the above principles in relation to any adult pupil with a special vulnerability.

6. 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 attending the school, the school adheres to the relevant procedures set out in Chapter 7 of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (revised 2023)* and to the relevant agreed disciplinary procedures for school staff which are published on the gov.ie website.
- In relation to the selection or recruitment of staff and their suitability to work with children, the school adheres to the statutory vetting requirements of the [National Vetting Bureau \(Children and Vulnerable Persons\)](#) Acts 2012 to 2016 and to the wider duty of care guidance set out in relevant Garda vetting and recruitment circulars published by the Department of Education and available on the gov.ie website.
- 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 2015 Act) the school-
 - Has provided each member of staff with a copy of the school's Child Safeguarding Statement
 - Ensures all new staff are provided with a copy of the school's Child Safeguarding Statement
 - Encourages staff to avail of relevant training
 - Encourages Board of Management members to avail of relevant training
 - The Board of Management maintains records of all staff and Board member training
- In relation to reporting of child protection concerns to Tusla, all school personnel are required to adhere to the procedures set out in the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (revised 2023)*, including in the case of registered teachers, those in relation to mandated reporting under the Children First Act 2015.
- All registered teachers employed by the school are mandated persons under the Children First Act 2015.
- In accordance with the Children First Act 2015 and the Addendum to Children First (2019), the Board has carried out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child while attending the school or participating in school activities. A written assessment setting out the areas of risk identified and the school's procedures for managing those risks is included with the Child Safeguarding Statement.
- The various procedures referred to in this Statement can be accessed via the school's website, the gov.ie website or will be made available on request by the school.

Note: The above is not intended as an exhaustive list. Individual Boards of Management shall also include in this section such other procedures/measures that are of relevance to the school in question.

7. This statement has been published on the school's website and has been provided to all members of school personnel, the Parents' Association (if any) and the patron. It is readily accessible to parents and guardians on request. A copy of this Statement will be made available to Tusla and the Department if requested.

8. This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed annually or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this statement refers.

This Child Safeguarding Statement was adopted by the Board of Management on 17th Sept 24.

This Child Safeguarding Statement was reviewed by the Board of Management on 17th Sept 24.

Signed: Angela Wood

Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 17th Sept 24

Signed: Sean P. Ladd

Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 17th Sept '24

Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment

Written Assessment of Risk of Finn Valley College

In accordance with section 11 of the Children First Act 2015 and with the requirements of Chapter 8 of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017*, the following is the Written Risk Assessment of [name of school].

1. List of school activities

Schools are extremely complex organisations and a wide range of activities occur within a school on a daily basis as well as at other regular intervals throughout the academic year. Additionally, there are stand alone events that also occur as part of school life. Finn Valley College is no exception. Below is a list of activities that capture part of that school life. The list is not exhaustive. Where a stakeholder identifies a new activity that should be added to the list the school will be happy to do this.

Daily School Life

- Daily arrival and dismissal of pupils
- Recreation breaks for pupils
- Classroom teaching
- One-to-one counselling
- Outdoor teaching activities
- Administration of Medicine
- Provision of Intimate Care
- Administration of First Aid
- Prevention and dealing with bullying or other challenging behaviour amongst pupils
- Application of sanctions under the school's Code of Behaviour including detention of pupils, confiscation of phones etc.
- Students participating in work experience in the school
- Students from the school participating in work experience elsewhere
- Breakfast club
- Homework club/evening study
- Online teaching and learning

Curriculum Provision

- Curricular provision in respect of SPHE, RSE, Friends for Life, Social Education
- Use of external personnel to supplement curriculum

Whole School Activities & Excursions

- Sporting Activities
- Drama / Music / Concert Activities
- School outings
- School trips involving overnight stay
- School trips involving foreign travel
- Annual Sports Day
- Christmas Party
- School Prom for 6th year students
- Fundraising events involving pupils
- Use of off-site facilities for school activities
- Use of toilet/changing/shower areas in schools
- School transport arrangements including the use of bus escorts

Student Supports

- Meetings of the Student Council
- Meetings of the Wellbeing Committee
- Meetings of the School's Environmental committee
- Reverse Integration programme

Supporting Students with Special Education Needs

- Care of children with special educational needs, including intimate care where needed.
- Management of challenging behaviour amongst pupils, including appropriate use of restraint where required
- One-to-one teaching
- Training of school personnel in child protection matters
- Use of external personnel to support sports and other extra-curricular activities
- Care of pupils with specific vulnerabilities/ needs such as
 - Pupils from ethnic minorities/migrants
 - Members of the Traveller community
 - Lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) children
 - Pupils perceived to be LGBT
 - Pupils of minority religious faiths
 - Children in care
 - Children on Child Protection Notification System (CPNS)
 - Intimate Care Needs

Staffing

- Recruitment of school personnel including -
 - Teachers
 - SNAs
 - Caretaker/Secretary/Cleaners
 - Bus Escorts
 - Student teachers undertaking training placement in school

Use of External Services /Agencies

- Involvement in Stranorlar School Completion Programme initiatives
- Involvement in HSCL led initiatives
- Sports coaches
- External Tutors/Guest Speakers
- Volunteers / Parents in school activities
- Visitors / contractors present in school during school hours
- Visitors / contractors present during after school activities
 - After school use of school premises by other organisations
 - Use of school premises by other organisations during school day

Use of Information & Communication Technology

- Students' use of ICT
- Teachers' use of ICT as a pedagogic tool
- Teachers' use of ICT to share resources or work with student outside of school hours
- Use of video/photography/other media to record and or publicise school events
- Use of social media for personal use
- Use of digital technologies for the purpose of teaching online and for assigning and collecting work from students.

2. The school has identified the following risk of harm in respect of its activities -

General

- Finn Valley College provides an education service to students ranging on average from 12 years of age to 20 years of age (for those enrolled in PLC courses). Students of these ages are by virtue of their age more vulnerable than adults and therefore require increased support to ensure their protection and welfare.
- In addition the school also provides an education service to a small number of students with special education needs who are more vulnerable than their peers and who therefore carry a greater duty of care and by extension require more supports than other children might reasonably require.
- Additionally the following risks potentially exist:
 - Potential risk of harm not being recognised by school personnel
 - Potential risk of harm not being reported properly and promptly by school personnel
 - Potential risk of child being harmed in the school by a member of school personnel
 - Potential risk of harm due to inappropriate use of online remote teaching and learning platform such as an uninvited person accessing the lesson link.
 - Potential risk of child being harmed in the school by another child
 - Potential risk of a child being harmed by a young adult learner(PLC)
 - Potential risk of child being harmed in the school by volunteer or visitor to the school
 - Potential risk of harm through inappropriate administering of intimate care.
 - Potential risk of child being harmed by a member of school personnel, a member of staff of another organisation or other person while child participating in out of school activities e.g. school trip, swimming lessons
 - Potential risk of harm due to bullying of child that has child protection connotations
 - potential risk of harm due to racism.
 - Potential risk of harm due to inadequate supervision of children in school
 - Potential risk of harm due to inadequate supervision of children while attending out of school activities
 - Potential risk of harm due to inappropriate relationship/communications between child and another child or adult

- Potential risk of harm due to children inappropriately accessing/using computers, social media, phones and other devices while at school
- Potential risk of harm to children with SEN who have particular vulnerabilities
- Potential risk of harm to child while a child is receiving intimate care
- Potential risk of harm in one-to-one teaching, counselling, coaching situation
- Potential risk of harm to pupils through flight from school.
- Potential risk of harm caused by member of school personnel communicating with pupils in appropriate manner via social media, texting, digital device or other manner
- Potential risk of harm caused by a member of school personnel accessing / circulating inappropriate material via social media, texting, digital device or other manner.
- Potential risk of harm caused by a member of school community acting inappropriately while engaged in online teaching or learning.

3. The school has the following procedures in place to address the risks of harm identified in this assessment -

In managing the risk associated with a school Finn Valley College has in place a number of structures, systems, policies and procedures to ensure the safety and welfare of students in its care. These include:

A. Adoption and Implementation of relevant procedures

The board of management of Finn Valley College has adopted unamended the revised Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2023. These procedures have been developed by the Department of Education & Skills in accordance with the Children First Act 2015 and the National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017. These Procedures are available to all staff. All school personnel are provided with a copy of the school's *Child Safeguarding Statement* on an annual basis.

B. Vetting

a. Staff - All teaching staff are vetted by the Teaching Council and this is a requirement for registration and employment purposes. In addition newly appointed teaching staff are also vetted by Donegal ETB prior to appointment. Special Needs Assistants and ancillary or administrative staff are also vetted by Donegal ETB.

b. Non-staff -

- All PLC students are vetted prior to commencement of the courses in which they are enrolled.
- Regular service providers such as canteen operators, bus drivers are vetted by Donegal ETB.
- All volunteers or facilitators who will be interacting with students are vetted by Donegal ETB.

C. Curricular Provision

The school offers the SPHE course to Leaving Certificate. It also provides tuition in RSE. The school has also implemented in full the new Wellbeing programme which is part of the new Junior Cycle. This includes the full 100 hour short course in SPHE.

D. Mandated Persons

All teachers are now mandated persons under the terms of the Children First Act 2015. This means that teachers are now required to report concerns disclosed to them by students or parents / guardians directly to Tusla in accordance with the procedures set down by the Department of Education & Skills.

E. Supervision & Substitution

The school has a structured supervision and substitution scheme operated by fully trained staff who have all been vetted by Donegal ETB and / or the Teaching Council. The scheme provides supervision for all scheduled breaks while substitution arrangements are put in place as need arises to ensure no student is left unsupervised in class. Teachers are required to ensure students are never removed from class to be left unsupervised.

F. Building / Environmental controls

Finn Valley College has in place a secure lock system on its main entrance to ensure only those who are authorised to access the building may do so.

The school has in place a system which keeps younger and older students separate for some key times.

PLC students are taught in classes which are for the most part separate from the main school building.

Junior and senior students have lockers on different floors while there are separate toilet facilities for senior and junior students. Students with special education needs may have special lockers assigned to safeguard these children.

There are also separate toileting facilities for students with disabilities and / or special education needs where the use of a common toilet might compromise their dignity or welfare.

G. Guidance Counsellors

Finn Valley College has two fully trained Guidance Counsellors who link in with students on a regular basis to check on their wellbeing and to offer support for students in crisis. The Guidance Counsellors in the school also conduct surveys of students to ascertain if any student may be struggling either in school or at home.

H. Home School Community Liaison (HSCL)

Our school has a full time HSCL teacher who links in with students and parents to offer support particularly in the area of welfare. She liaises with various agencies to support the most vulnerable children who may be in crisis.

I. Student Support Team

Finn Valley College has a Student Support Team comprising senior management, the two Guidance Counsellors, the HSCL and the NCSE Behaviour for Learning teacher. An extended team comprising ASD teachers and the school administrator also convenes annually to identify incoming/new students at risk. The core team has a scheduled meeting each week which reviews significant welfare developments in the welfare of identified students who may be at risk. Identified students who may be at risk are assigned a link person who is a Student Support Team member and all staff are made aware of the list of these students along with their link persons that staff can refer directly to them if a concern emerges. Staff are made aware of the different referral routes available to them, if an issue emerges. Interventions are discussed and actions implemented where appropriate.

J. Inter-agency cooperation

The school cooperates with a number of agencies to ensure that child welfare is safeguarded for all children under its care. Such cooperation includes liaising with Tusla, CAMHS, Springboard, HSE, An Garda Síochána, Foróige, Donegal Youth Services, Jigsaw, Stranorlar SCP etc.

K. Staff Supports

- Staff CPD - Staff are encouraged and facilitated in attending appropriate CPD to support them in their role safeguarding the welfare of all children under their care. All staff are required to have received training in Child Protection from Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)
- Key staff working with vulnerable students have received appropriate training including MAPA Training.
- Staff Handbook - Staff are provided with a handbook each year in which clear information and advice is given in relation to child protection and welfare. Advice on identifying students at risk and what to do if a child makes a disclosure is included in the handbook. An outline of appropriate procedures to follow as well as information about the relevant person to whom concerns should be brought is included in the booklet.
- Induction of new staff - All new staff are inducted in the school providing them with the staff handbook and an overview of child protection procedures. Additionally, the school is part of Droichead, the national induction programme for new teachers.

L. Membership of Stranorlar School Completion Programme

Finn Valley College is part of the Stranorlar Completion Programme, a collaborative partnership of local schools which seeks to support students at risk of early leaving. All interventions in the SCP seek to protect children and improve their welfare. The personnel involved in the delivery of SCP initiatives are subject to Garda Vetting. Additionally, appropriate reporting structures and mechanisms are in place.

M. Pastoral Care System

Finn Valley College operates an effective Pastoral Care system comprising Year Heads and Class teachers who have regular contact with their appointed class or year groups. These staff members are available to students who may be undergoing a welfare or child protection crisis and to whom they may feel comfortable disclosing information.

N. Managing allegations against members of the public

Where a Child Protection / Welfare allegation is made against a member of the public (including parents / guardians of the student) the Designated Liaison Person, or Deputy Designated Liaison Person in his absence, will make a report (or joint report where the disclosure was made to a teacher) to the Social Work Intake team of Tusla. If Tusla cannot be contacted then a report will be made to the Garda Síochána in matters of Child Protection. All allegations will be managed in accordance with the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.

O. Managing allegations against members of staff

In accordance with the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 developed by the Department of Education & Skills where an allegation is made against a member of staff the Chief Executive of Donegal ETB or her authorised delegate will meet with the member of staff and ask him/her to remove himself/herself from the school immediately as a precautionary measure to protect the child and to ensure Donegal ETB is in a position to deal with the allegation. The staff member will remain on full pay. The action taken by the principal is precautionary and not disciplinary and the employee's right to a presumption of innocence remains.

P. ICT

Finn Valley College has the following controls in place in relation to ICT

- Staff Social Media Usage Policy
- Student Internet Usage Policy
- Donegal ETB Guidelines on Using Video Conferencing Applications for Teachers (April 2020)
- Prohibition on the use of mobile phones for all second level students
- Appropriate filters in relation to the internet and social media developed by the NCTE preventing access on school network

Q. Appropriate Policies and Procedures

Finn Valley College has in place a number of policies and procedures which help to eliminate risk of harm to students including:

Admissions & Enrolment Policy

Code of Behaviour

Anti-Bullying Policy

Student Wellbeing Policy

Student Support Team Policy

Critical Incident Policy

Special Education Needs Policy

Administration of Medicines Policy

Intimate Care Policy

Volunteering Policy

Excursions Policy

Whole School Activities Policy

Student Mentoring Policy

Internet & Network Usage Policy

Data Protection Policy

Use of Student Images Policy

CCTV Policy

School Substance Use Policy

Health & Safety Policy

Guidance Plan

Social Media Policy (Staff)

Donegal ETB Guidelines on Using Video Conferencing Applications for Teachers (April 2020)

R. Protocols relating to Online teaching & learning

Finn Valley College ensures that teaching staff only communicate with students via approved channels, namely, GMail, GMeet and Google Classroom.

Staff provide the principal with a copy of all codes for Google Classroom which the principal is free to access if there is any suspicion of inappropriate activity occurring via any of these fora.

Parents are free to check on their children's Google Classroom accounts to satisfy themselves that all activity on this account is appropriate.

Teachers are advised to respect students' right to privacy when engaged in online learning. Students are not forced to keep a camera or microphone switched on at all times but may be requested to do so on occasion to engage with or contribute to a lesson.

S. Protocols relating to Visitors

The school has a secure entrance that is protected by code.

The school has a visitors' log in which all visitors to the school must sign in and sign out.

In addition to the measures outlined above separate extra measures are put in place to support the most vulnerable students and manage any risk in respect of their welfare.

- A. The school has three ASD classrooms to support students with autism. The rooms are fully staffed with teachers and SNAs on hand throughout the day to support students who are vulnerable. This core staff work very closely with the students to ensure they are fully protected while in the school.
- B. Specialised programmes are run for students with additional and / or special education needs. These programmes are delivered by staff who are trained in the delivery of special education supports.
- C. Students with assessed special education needs have access to SNA support to ensure their care needs and welfare is safeguarded.
- D. Special arrangements are put in place at social times to support students with complex special education needs. A separate room is available for vulnerable students which is always supervised.
- E. A section of the canteen is reserved for students with complex special education needs and this is monitored by SNAs.
- F. Separate changing facilities are used for students with complex learning needs in order to safeguard their dignity.

Important Note: It should be noted that risk in the context of this risk assessment is the risk of "harm" as defined in the Children First Act 2015 and not general health and safety risk. The definition of harm is set out in Chapter 4 of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023)*

In undertaking this risk assessment, the board of management has endeavoured to identify as far as possible the risks of harm that are relevant to this school and to ensure that adequate procedures are in place to manage all risks identified. While it is not possible to foresee and remove all risk of harm, the school has in place the procedures listed in this risk assessment to manage and reduce risk to the greatest possible extent.