

## Confidentiality Policy- August 2021



### CBS Syngé Street

**School Vision Statement:** Syngé Street is an all-boys ERST secondary school. A vibrant community embracing diversity and inclusivity among staff, students and parents.

- All individuals are valued and supported by an energetic and dedicated staff.
- Syngé Street School is a community where student, parent and staff voices are heard and listened to.
- We aim to build on academic achievement through the use of informed teaching methodologies and practices, providing students with the opportunity to become leaders of their own learning.

The motto of our school is *Viriliter Age*: Act Courageously. This reflects our school's commitment to being respectful, being responsible and being ready.

**Purpose:** The purpose of our school's confidentiality policy is to outline and clarify information and procedures around confidentiality within our school community.

This policy outlines all aspects involved in confidentiality within the school and should be read in conjunction with other school policies.

**Context:** Our school is an all-boy's school serving Dublin's South inner-city. We enroll around 280 students.

This confidentiality policy is written in the context of contemporary legislation and other relevant publications. A list of references is provided at the end of this document.

**Confidentiality and the roll of staff:** The safety and welfare of children is the key principle underlying all decision making within our school in line with the Child Care Act 1991 and the Children First Act (2015).

Our school adopts a student-centered approach to education.

Support of students is paramount in our school community.

The Children First Guidelines (2017) are applied in our school as appropriate.

All staff members must be aware that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

In supporting the students of our school, all stakeholders must be aware of the limits to confidentiality.

This includes a legal obligation to share information as follows, where a student's welfare is at risk.

In the case where any member of the school community is aware of a concern to child welfare and safety this concern must be reported to one of the following:

- (i) The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) in our school: Ms. Clare Catterson, school principal.
- (ii) The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL) in our school: Ms. Lesley Plunket, school deputy principal.
- (iii) Child and Family Agency Child Protection Social Work Services: Any stakeholder can report a child protection concern about a student or school directly to them by contacting the local social work office at:

Lord Edward Street Duty Social Work Department

Carnegie Centre 21-25 Lord Edward Street

Dublin 2, D02 AE14

Telephone: 01 648 6500.

In cases where school personnel have a concern about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to Tusla, the designated liaison person shall seek advice from Tusla.

In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk, and it is not possible to contact Tusla, An Garda Síochána shall be contacted immediately. This may be done at any Garda Station. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending Tusla intervention.

It is not the responsibility of school personnel to assess or investigate or to make enquiries of parents/carers, and in some cases, it could be counter-productive for them to do so. It is a matter for Tusla to assess and investigate suspected abuse and neglect and determine what action it will take.

**Additional information for learners under 18 years of age:** All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse or neglect should be shared only on a 'need to know' basis in the interests of the child.

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 states that it is good practice to inform the parent/carer that a report is being made and the reasons for the decision to make the report. However, Children First National Guidance 2017 also notes that it is not necessary to inform a parent/carer that a report is being made:

- (a) if by doing so, the child will be placed at further risk
- (b) in cases where the family's knowledge of the report could impair Tusla's ability to carry out a risk assessment
- (c) if the reporter is of the reasonable opinion that by doing so it may place the reporter at risk of harm from the family.

Where there is any doubt as to whether to inform a parent/carer that a report is being made concerning his or her child the advice of Tusla shall be sought.

**Confidentiality and learners over 18:** It is recognized that some schools may also cater for adult pupils with additional vulnerabilities.

Where a vulnerable adult may have been, is being, or is at future risk of being abused or neglected- the advice of the HSE, or if necessary, An Garda Síochána should be sought.

Further information in relation to the safeguarding of vulnerable adults is available on the website of the HSE [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie).

**Links between this policy and other policies:** This confidentiality policy should be read in conjunction with the school's policies on:

- Code of Conduct
- Admissions
- Assessment Reporting
- Data Protection
- Child Protection
- Mobile Phones
- Crisis Response
- Relationships and Sexuality Education

**Record Keeping:** Our school recognises the importance of record keeping.

Our school keeps records in accordance with Appendix 4 of the DES Child Protection Procedures in Primary and Post-primary (2017).

All school records and data pertaining to students and parents/guardians are regarded as highly confidential and are stored in line with GDPR (2018) procedures.

**Communicating the limits to confidentiality with staff:** The limits to all staff-student confidentiality are made clear to staff on an annual basis at the first staff meeting of the year.

Staff should consult a member of management if they have any questions or concerns about our school's confidentiality policy.

**Communication of the limits to confidentiality with students and parents/guardians:** The limits to all staff-student confidentiality are made clear to students & parents/guardians in our school in the following ways:

- Students are reminded about confidentiality at their first assembly of every school year.
- A 'limits to confidentiality' sign is on display in the Guidance Counsellor's office

There are limits to confidentiality within our school. Under circumstances where an individual is at risk of significant harm, a duty exists on the part of those with information to alert others to the risk perceived.

**What to do when an issue arises:** The sample School Referral Procedures (see attached document) provide information and guidelines as to how to respond to any issue presented to a staff member.

TUSLA the Child and Family Agency and An Garda Síochána are the two key authorities. TUSLA the Child and Family Agency has a duty to assess reports regarding a child's welfare or safety.

The specific focus of An Garda Síochána is on the investigation of alleged offences and whether a crime has been committed.

**Responsibility in relation to the policy:** This section should clearly outline who is involved in the development, implementation and review of the policy: Senior Management, Guidance Counsellor, SEN team, and the Board of Management.

**Accessibility:** This policy is available in the Staff Handbook 2021-2022

**Date policy ratified by BOM:**

**Date for review of policy:**

**SSE:** Our school is aware that when conducting a Whole School Evaluation, Department inspectors seek evidence to confirm that a school is complying with the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools 2017.

## **References/Relevant documents and information:**

### **Confidentiality and Consent in Guidance in Schools:**

- [Guidelines for second-level schools on the implications of Section 9\(c\) of the Education Act 1998, relating to students' access to appropriate Guidance \(2006\)](#)
- [Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children \(2017\)](#)
- [Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook](#)
- [Data Protection in Schools](#)

### **Confidentiality Policy:**

- [Education Act \(1998\)](#)
- [The Child Care Act \(1991\)](#)
- [Children First Act \(2015\)](#)
- [Contacting Tusla](#)
- [Overview of the GDPR for primary and post-primary schools in Ireland](#)
- [Department of Education and Skills \(2017\) Child Protection Procedures in Primary and Post-primary](#)
- [ChildrenFirst National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children \(2017\)](#)
- [Department of Education and Skills- Information relating to Child Protection](#)

### **National Ireland Guidance Forum Report (2007)**

- [Guidance for Life: An integrated framework for lifelong guidance in Ireland](#)
- [Quality in Guidance Report](#)