



Wilson's Hospital School

Confidentiality Policy

The purpose of our school's confidentiality policy is to outline and clarify information and procedures around confidentiality for all stakeholders 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.

Wilson's Hospital School is a Church of Ireland co-educational post primary school with a Church of Ireland and Anglican ethos under the patronage of the of Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of Ireland. This Confidentiality Policy is written in the context of contemporary legislation and other relevant publications - General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) (2018) and Children First Guidance (2017).

Confidentiality and the Role 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-centred 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 student 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 is Mrs Niamh McShane, Principal.
- (ii) The Deputy Designated Liaison Person is (DDL), Mr John Galligan, 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 by contacting the local Social Work Office, Child and Family Agency, Primary Care Centre, Harbour Road, Mullingar, Co Westmeath, phone number 044 9353997.

<https://www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare/contact-a-social-worker/>

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 shall 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 recognised that some schools may also cater for adult students 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

Links to other Policies

This Confidentiality Policy should be read in conjunction with the Schools' Policies on Admissions, Code of Behaviour, Rules of Residence, Guidance Policy, SEN Policy, One-to-One Staff Student Interaction Policy, Data Protection Policy etc.

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 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 the 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

Communicating 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:

Parents/Guardians sign a 'Confidentiality Agreement' when a student first registers as a student in the school.

Students are reminded about confidentiality at their first assembly of every school year

A 'limits to confidentiality' sign is on display in the Guidance Counsellors 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

Our Child Protection Policy and Procedures provide information and guidelines as to how to respond to any child protection 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.

Responsibilities in relation to the Policy

The following staff are actively involved in the active development, implementation and review of this policy:

- (i) The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) - Mrs Niamh McShane, Principal.
- (ii) The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLDP) - Mr John Galligan, Deputy Principal.
- (iii) Matron – Mrs Susan Reynolds
- (iv) Career Guidance Counsellor Ms Freda Malone
- (v) SENCO – Ms Danh Hy
- (vi) Chaplain – Mr Luke Hawkins

Accessibility

The Policy is available on our website www.whs.ie and a hard copy is available on request from the school.

Approved by School Management Board on 17th November 2020



Wilson's Hospital School, Multyfarnham, Co Westmeath

Consent Form to attend Confidential One to One Guidance Sessions

(To be included as part of admissions policy and /or enrolment documents)

The whole-school guidance programme in this school aims to provide a safe environment for each student to grow and to develop their personal, social, careers, educational and life choices.

Where appropriate, guidance counsellor(s) provide a confidential one-to-one guidance counselling service to students. In this context the guidance counsellor may discuss a range of careers, educational, personal and / or social development issues.

If your son/daughter wishes to meet the guidance counsellor on a one-to-one basis at any stage throughout their time in the school your permission is required.

Our school Policy on Confidentiality is accessible on our website
<http://www.wilsonshospital.school.com/index.php/academic>

Our school policy on confidentiality is informed, among others, by the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Children First Guidelines (2017).

To be completed by Parent / Guardian and returned for attention of the School Principal

Name of Student: _____

Year: _____

Name of Parent / Guardian: _____

I give my permission for the student named above to meet with school guidance counsellor(s) on a one-to-one basis in keeping with the School's mission of support for students and in the context of the School's whole-school guidance programme.

Signature (of Parent / Guardian): _____

Date: _____