

Good Safeguarding Practice in the Provision of Religious Education to Children and Young People in a Parish Setting

Rationale for this policy

Many Catholic children attend non-Catholic schools and they, and their parents, wish to receive religious education in the Catholic tradition and, in particular, to be prepared for the sacraments of Communion and Confirmation. Parishes have responded to this by providing such education and preparation. The Child Safeguarding and Protection Service (CSPS) was asked for advice and direction on how this can be most safely delivered in a parish context.

Working Group

In February 2021, a working group was convened by Garry Kehoe, Training and Compliance Manager with CSPS. The other members were:

Ms. Cathy Burke, School Principal and contributor to sacramental preparation materials;
Ms. Natalie Doherty, Parish Catechist for Kilnamanagh/Castleview Parishes;
Ms. Christina Malone, Parish Pastoral Worker, Clondalkin Grouping of Parishes;
Fr. Donal Roche, Episcopal Vicar and Administrator, Wicklow Parish;
Fr. Paul Thornton, Episcopal Vicar and Co P.P., Brackenstown Parish.

Guidelines

The working group proposes the following guidelines.

1. The provision of religious education, including sacramental preparation, to children and young people by the parish in non-school settings, is a parish ministry and, as such, the parish carries responsibility for ensuring that all appropriate safeguarding measures are in place. This applies irrespective of whether the activity takes place on parish property or at another location.
2. Those who deliver such education are appointed by the parish priest/ priest in charge in accordance with the appropriate recruitment procedures. The people providing such ministry are deemed to be “Catechists” whether this role is voluntary or paid.

This policy was approved by Archbishop Farrell on an interim basis on 31 May 2021. It will be reviewed by the diocesan Safeguarding Committee in 2022, when there has been an opportunity to monitor and assess its implementation.

3. The appropriate safeguarding measures are set out in Chapter 3 of “Child Safeguarding in the Archdiocese of Dublin 2018”. This document can be accessed at <http://csps.dublindiocese.ie/policies/>
4. Diocesan recruitment policy applies to all those who deliver such ministry. This policy can be accessed at <http://csps.dublindiocese.ie/resources/>
All people involved in such ministries must be Garda vetted by the parish, irrespective of vetting they may have completed for other organisations. This is a requirement of the National Vetting Bureau Act 2012/2016. They are also required to attend appropriate safeguarding training every three years.
5. Those involved in such ministry are also required to report any child protection concern that arises in the course of their work with the children and young people to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) or deputy DLP of the Diocese (see below) as set out in Chapter 4 of “Child Safeguarding in the Archdiocese of Dublin 2018”.
6. Catechists are defined as “Mandated Persons” under the Children First Act 2015. This legislation requires that they report, without delay, any child protection concern that arises in the course of their ministry with children and young people to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. This is most easily done by the diocesan DLP or deputy DLP as a joint report with the mandated person. However, the mandated person may decide to make their own report and this is acceptable provided they also report the matter to CSPS.
7. Safeguarding forms, such as Parental Consent Forms, Attendance Records and Vetting Disclosures, should **only** be stored in the parish office. All these forms can be accessed at <http://csps.dublindiocese.ie/resources/>
8. It is not appropriate for catechists to minister alone. Another adult person or persons should be present or easily available and the catechist should be visible to the other person/ persons. In the event of the unexpected unavailability of someone from the parish, a parent or parents should be asked to remain on the premises for the duration of the class. Vetting is not required for such occasional helping out but if a person is repeatedly asked to do so they should be vetted.

Contact details

Diocesan Child Safeguarding & Protection Service (CSPS)

- Designated Liaison Person
Mr. Andrew Fagan, Director, Child Safeguarding & Protection Service,
Holy Cross Diocesan Centre, Clonliffe Road, Dublin DO3 P2E7. Tel. 01-8360314
(Mon–Fri: 09:00 – 17:00)

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- Deputy Designated Liaison Person
Ms. Deirdre Donnelly, Safeguarding & Support Officer,
Child Safeguarding & Protection Service
Holy Cross Diocesan Centre, Clonliffe Road, Dublin DO3 P2E7. Tel. 01-8360314
(Mon–Fri: 09:00 – 17:00)

Tusla, Child and Family Agency:

Contact details of your local office are given on the parish safeguarding notice and on www.tusla.ie

An Garda Síochána:

Contact details for your local Garda station are given on the parish safeguarding notice and on www.garda.ie.

If there is an immediate concern for the protection of a child, the Gardaí should be contacted without delay on 999 or 112.

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