



Oide

Tacú leis an bhFoghlaim
Ghairmiúil i measc Ceannairí
Scoile agus Múinteoirí

Supporting the Professional
Learning of School Leaders
and Teachers

Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025

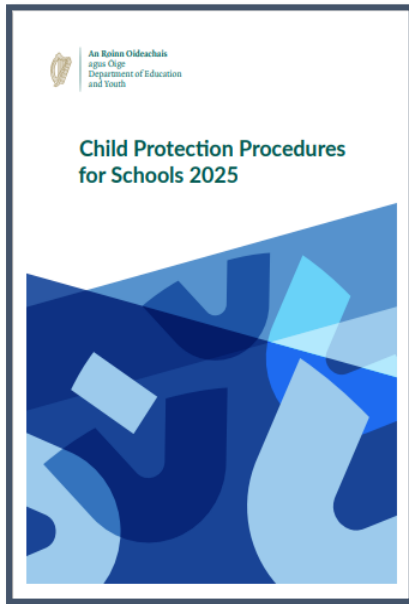
Whole School Personnel
Professional Learning Booklet
2025-2026



Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with rounded corners, framed by a thick dark blue border. The paper is ruled with horizontal black lines, spaced evenly apart. There are no margins or other markings on the page.

Important Information



The Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025 and the accompanying Circular 0041/2025 should be the primary source of information for school personnel on matters relating to child protection.

The content of this Professional Learning Event and Professional Learning Booklet is not intended to replace the need to fully engage with the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025.

Child Protection Procedures can be found [here](#).

Our Current Practice

Discuss and record what child safeguarding and child protection look like in your school.

What are you doing well?

Types of Child Abuse

Read through the scenarios and use Sections 2.2.1 – 2.2.4 to:

1. Identify the predominant type of abuse evident.
2. Identify the relevant examples of abuse.

Scenario	Scenario
Scenario	Scenario

Types of Child Abuse: Neglect (CPP for Schools 2025 pg. 17-18)

2.2.1 Neglect

Children First National Guidance 2017 outlines that child neglect is the most frequently reported category of abuse, both in Ireland and internationally. Ongoing chronic neglect is recognised as being extremely harmful to the development and wellbeing of the child and may have serious long-term negative consequences.

Neglect

- > Neglect occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision, to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally.

Neglect is generally defined in terms of an omission of care, where a child's health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety. Emotional neglect may also lead to the child having difficulties of attachment. The extent of the damage to the child's health, development or welfare is influenced by a range of factors. These factors include the extent, if any, of positive influence in the child's life, as well as the age of the child and the frequency and consistency of neglect.

Neglect is associated with poverty, but not necessarily caused by it, nor is poverty necessarily a factor. It is strongly linked to parental substance misuse, domestic violence and parental mental illness and disability.

A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when neglect becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer. This may become apparent where the child is seen over a period of time, or the effects of neglect may be obvious based on having seen the child once.

The following are features of child neglect:

- > Children being left alone without adequate care and supervision.
- > Malnourishment, lacking food, unsuitable food or erratic feeding.
- > Non-organic failure to thrive, that is, a child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also emotional deprivation.
- > Failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical and developmental needs, including intellectual stimulation.
- > Inadequate living conditions – unhygienic conditions, environmental issues, including lack of adequate heating and furniture.
- > Lack of adequate clothing.
- > Inattention to basic hygiene.
- > Lack of protection and exposure to danger, including moral danger or lack of supervision appropriate to the child's age.
- > Persistent failure to attend school.
- > Abandonment or desertion.

Types of Child Abuse: Emotional Abuse (CPP for Schools 2025 pg. 18-19)

2.2.2 Emotional Abuse

Emotional Abuse

- > Emotional Abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child.

Once-off and occasional difficulties between a parent/carer and child are not considered emotional abuse. Abuse occurs when a child's basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security are not met, due to incapacity or indifference from their parent or caregiver. Emotional abuse can also occur when adults responsible for taking care of children are unaware of and unable (for a range of reasons) to meet the children's emotional and developmental needs. Emotional abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are not always easily seen. A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when the behaviour becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer.

Emotional abuse may be seen in some of the following ways:

- > Rejection.
- > Lack of comfort and love.
- > Lack of attachment.
- > Lack of proper stimulation (e.g. fun and play).
- > Lack of continuity of care (e.g. frequent moves, particularly unplanned).
- > Continuous lack of praise and encouragement.
- > Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming of the child.
- > Bullying.
- > Conditional parenting in which care or affection of a child is made contingent on their behaviours or actions.
- > Extreme over-protectiveness.
- > Inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g. locking child in bedroom).
- > Ongoing family conflicts and family violence.
- > Seriously inappropriate expectations of a child relative to their age and stage of development.

There may be no physical signs of emotional abuse unless it occurs with another type of abuse. A child may show signs of emotional abuse through their actions or emotions in several ways. These include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, risk taking and aggressive behaviour. It should be noted that no one indicator is conclusive evidence of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is more likely to impact negatively on a child where it is persistent over time and where there is a lack of other protective factors.

Types of Child Abuse: Physical Abuse (CPP for Schools 2025 pg. 19-20)

2.2.3 Physical Abuse

Physical Abuse

- > Physical Abuse is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt.

Physical abuse may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents. A reasonable concern exists where the child's health and/or development is, may be, or has been damaged as a result of suspected physical abuse.

Physical abuse can include the following:

- > Physical punishment.
- > Beating, slapping, hitting or kicking.
- > Pushing, shaking or throwing.
- > Pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling.
- > Use of excessive force in handling.
- > Deliberate poisoning.
- > Suffocation.
- > Fabricated/induced illness.
- > Female genital mutilation.

The Children First Act 2015 includes a provision that abolishes the common law defence of reasonable chastisement in court proceedings. This defence could previously be invoked by a parent or other person in authority who physically disciplined a child. The change in the legislation now means that in prosecutions relating to assault or physical cruelty, a person who administers such punishment to a child cannot rely on the defence of reasonable chastisement in the legal proceedings.

Corporal punishment has been banned in schools since 1982.

Types of Child Abuse: Sexual Abuse (CPP for Schools 2025 pg. 20-21)

2.2.4 Sexual Abuse

Sexual Abuse

- > Sexual Abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or arousal, or for that of others.

Sexual abuse includes the child being involved in sexual acts (masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex) or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography.

Child sexual abuse may cover a wide spectrum of abusive activities. It rarely involves just a single incident and in many instances occurs over a number of years. Child sexual abuse most commonly happens within the family, including older siblings and extended family members.

Cases of sexual abuse mainly come to light through disclosure by the child or their siblings/friends, from the suspicions of an adult and/or by physical symptoms.

It should be remembered that sexual activity involving a young person may be sexual abuse even if the young person concerned does not themselves recognise it as abusive.

Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:

- > Any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of the child.
- > An invitation to sexual touching or intentional touching or molesting of a child's body whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification.
- > Masturbation in the presence of a child or the involvement of a child in an act of masturbation.
- > Sexual intercourse with a child, whether oral, vaginal or anal.
- > Sexual exploitation of a child, which includes:
 - ~ Inviting, inducing or coercing a child to engage in prostitution or the production of child pornography [for example, exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act including its recording (on film, videotape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of an image by computer or other means];
 - ~ Inviting, coercing or inducing a child to participate in, or to observe, any sexual, indecent or obscene act;
 - ~ Showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse.
- > Exposing a child to inappropriate or abusive material through information and communication technology.
- > Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person.

Types of Child Abuse: Sexual Abuse (CPP for Schools 2025 pg. 20-21)

An Garda Síochána will deal with any criminal aspects of a sexual abuse case under the relevant criminal justice legislation. The prosecution of a sexual offence against a child will be considered within the wider objective of child welfare and protection. The safety of the child is paramount and at no stage should a child's safety be compromised because of concern for the integrity of a criminal investigation.

It should be noted that in criminal law, the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for both boys and girls. Any sexual relationship where one or both parties are under the age of 17 is illegal. However, it may not necessarily be regarded as child sexual abuse. Details on the exemptions for mandated reporting of certain underage sexual activity can be found in section 4.2.7(a) of these procedures.

Where a school becomes aware of underage sexual intercourse, the school should take appropriate steps to inform the child's parents/carers.

Dealing with Disclosures

Although there will always be barriers to children talking about the complex issue of child abuse, teachers can create conditions which support children in making disclosures. (Nohilly & Treacy, 2024)

Discuss and record:

Barriers that prevent students
from disclosing abuse

Conditions that support
students in disclosing abuse

Dealing with Disclosures

(CPP for Schools 2025 pg. 27-28)

2.9 Dealing With Disclosures From Children

It is important that all members of school personnel are aware and prepared for responding to a child who may disclose abuse.

Dealing With Disclosures From Children

- > A child or young person may disclose to a member of school personnel that they have been or are being harmed or abused.
- > Children will often have different ways of communicating that they are being abused. If a child hints at or tells a member of school personnel that they are being harmed by someone it should be treated in a sensitive way.
- > An abused child is likely to be under severe emotional stress and a member of school personnel may be the only adult who the child is prepared to trust. Great care must be taken not to damage that trust.
- > Information may be offered in confidence and the member of school personnel will need tact and sensitivity in responding to the disclosure.
- > The member of school personnel will need to reassure the child, and endeavour to retain their trust, while explaining the need for action which will necessarily involve other adults being informed.
- > It is important to tell the child that everything possible will be done to protect and support them, but not to make promises that cannot be kept, for example promising not to tell anyone else.

The following approach is suggested as best practice for dealing with these disclosures:

- > Be as calm and natural as possible.
- > Listen carefully and attentively. Give the child the time and opportunity to tell as much as they are able and wish to.
- > Take the child seriously.
- > Be aware that disclosures can be very difficult for the child.
- > Reassure the child that they have taken the right action in talking to you.
- > Do not pressurise the child. Allow them to disclose at their own pace and in their own language.
- > Do not promise to keep anything secret.
- > Remember that the child may initially be testing your reactions and may only fully open up over a period of time.
- > Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser.
- > It is important to differentiate between the person who carried out the abuse and the act of abuse itself. The child/young person quite possibly may love or strongly like the alleged abuser while also disliking what was done to them. It is important therefore to avoid expressing any judgement of, or anger towards the alleged perpetrator while talking with the child/young person.
- > It may be necessary to reassure the child/young person that your feelings towards him or her have not been affected in a negative way as a result of what they have disclosed.

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Dealing with Disclosures

(CPP for Schools 2025 pg. 27-28)

- > Questions should be supportive and for the purpose of clarification only (for example, ask "Am I correct in saying that...?").
- > Do not ask leading questions. Leading questions are questions that are asked in a way that is intended to produce a desired answer.
- > Check back with the child that what you have heard is correct and understood.
- > Ensure that the child understands the procedures that will follow.
- > Treat the information confidentially, subject to the requirements of the *Children First National Guidance 2017* and relevant legislation.

At the earliest possible opportunity:

- > Make a written record of the conversation as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible, preferably quoting words actually used. It is important to note that there is no need to anonymise this record at this point.
- > Signs of physical injury should be described in detail and, if appropriate, sketched.
- > While a child should be allowed to make a written statement if they wish to do so, **it is important to note that the child should not be asked to write the account of their disclosure for the record.**
- > Fact-check the written record with the child, where possible.

Where necessary, immediate action should be taken to ensure the child's safety.

The reporting requirements outlined in chapter 5 of these procedures must be followed at the earliest possible opportunity.

Ongoing Support

Disclosure is a huge step for a child. Following a disclosure by a child, it is important that the member of school personnel continues in a supportive relationship with the child. It is important to ensure that the child feels safe, and that any actions necessary for that safety are taken.

School personnel should also continue to offer support, particularly by:

- > Maintaining a positive relationship with the child.
- > Keeping lines of communication open by listening carefully to the child; Any further disclosure should be treated as a first disclosure and responded to as indicated above.

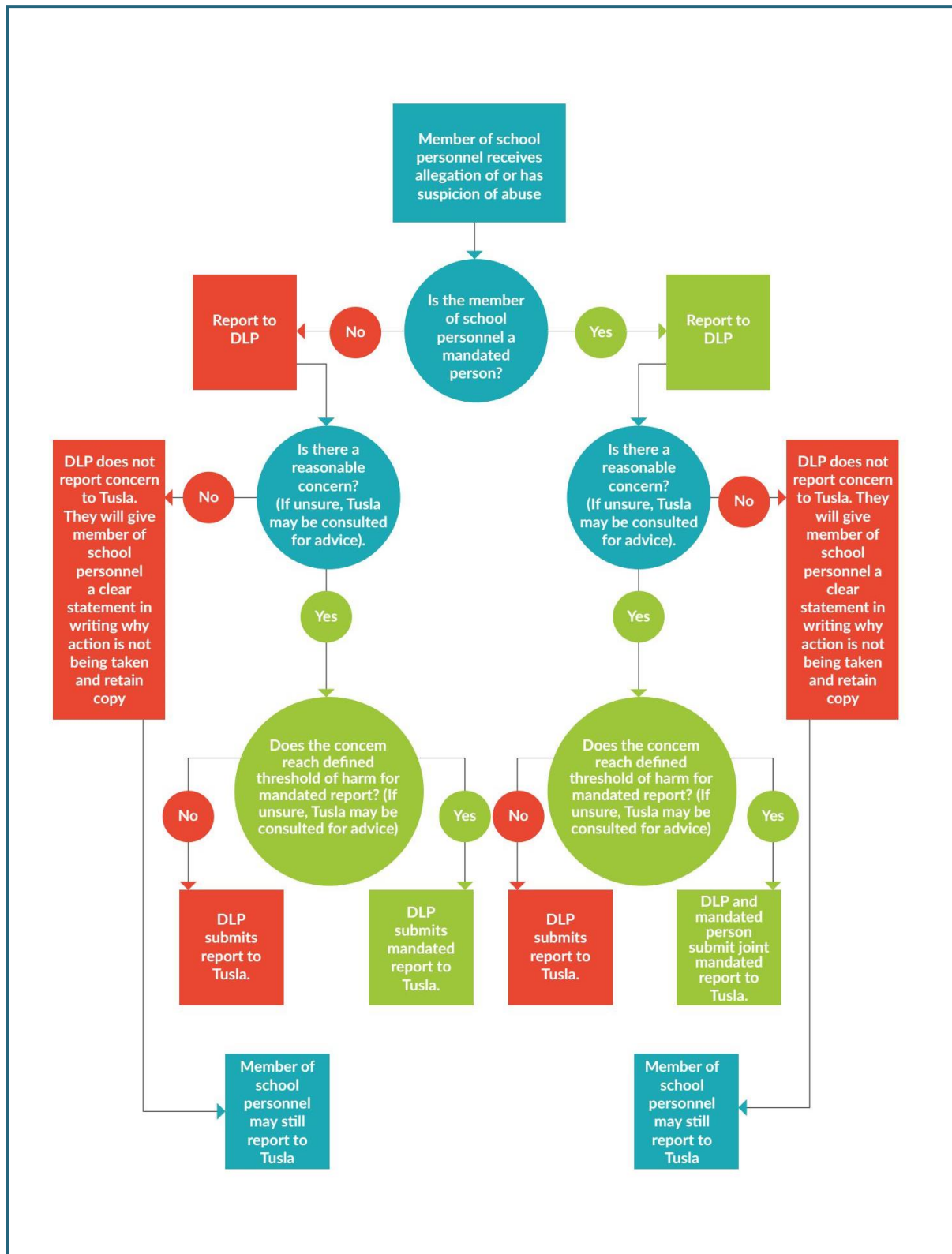
Any further disclosure should be treated as a first disclosure and responded to as indicated above. It must always be remembered that school personnel have a supportive, not an investigative role.

It is important to deal with any allegation of abuse or neglect in a sensitive manner through listening to and facilitating the child to tell about the problem, **rather than interviewing the child about details of what happened.**

Tusla has also published a "Child Safeguarding: A guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice" document which includes further guidance in relation to responding to a child who discloses abuse and it is available on Tusla's website.

Reporting of Concerns

Key Steps

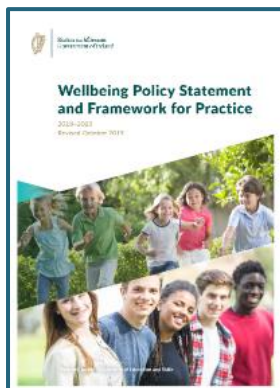


Child Safeguarding Activity

What safeguarding practices are happening in your school under each of the four key areas of wellbeing?

Culture

Curriculum



Relationships

Policy and Planning

Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment

Please note: The examples provided below are to assist schools in undertaking their risk assessment under the Children First Act, 2015. Schools should note that this list of examples is not intended to be exhaustive, and that the inclusion of an example of a policy or procedure on these lists does not make it mandatory.

It is the responsibility of each school to ensure, as far as possible, that any other risks and procedures that are relevant to its own particular circumstances are identified and specified in the written risk assessment and that adequate procedures are in place to address all risks identified.

Examples of Risk Assessment

List of School Activities	Risks Identified Against Each School Activity	Measures in Place to Mitigate Risk
Administration of Medicine	Risk of child being harmed by a member of school personnel.	The school has in place a policy and procedures for the administration of medication to pupils. The school has in place a policy and procedures for the administration of First Aid.
Curricular provision in respect of SPHE, RSE, Stay Safe	Risk of harm due to bullying of a child. Risk of harm due to racism. Risk of child being harmed in the school by another child. Risk of harm due to children not being provided with the opportunity to develop self-protection skills. Risk of harm due to inappropriate relationship/communications between a child and another child or adult.	The school implements in full the Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum. The school implements in full the Wellbeing Programme at Junior Cycle. School authorities have a code of Behaviour and an anti-bullying policy in place in accordance with the department's "Bí Cineálta" procedures to prevent and address bullying in schools and as outlined in Circular 55/2024. The school undertakes anti-racism awareness initiatives and inclusion initiatives e.g. Roma and Traveller culture.

[Child Protection Safeguarding Booklet \(pg. 11-16\)](#)

Activity

1. Read the worked examples in the Risk Assessment on page 13.
2. From the perspective of your own personal role within the school (mainstream class teacher, special class teacher, SET, SNA, secretary, bus escort, caretaker, etc), consider some typical school activities outlined.
3. Identify the specific risks against each school activity.
4. List which measures and procedures are/will be put in place to mitigate the risks.

List of School Activities	Risks Identified Against Each School Activity	Measures in Place to Mitigate Risk
Use of digital technologies by students and staff in school, including internet access and use of social media.		
School Outings		
Visitors present in school during school hours		

Student Friendly Child Safeguarding (Post Primary). CSS 4(a)

Review the sample Student Friendly Child Safeguarding Statement.

Insert school crest here



Child Safeguarding in our School

Child safeguarding is what we do in our school to keep children and young people safe from harm.

We think about how to keep everyone safe and we write down how we will do that.

This is called our **Child Safeguarding Statement**. We check this every year. When we do this we will ask you what you think about safeguarding in our school. It is important that you feel safe at school and in your life outside of school too.

If someone says or does something to hurt you or makes you feel uncomfortable, you can tell an adult that you trust.



Who to go to:

☒

Any trusted adult

For example, your Year Head or Tutor, a teacher, SNA, the Principal or Deputy

What we will do:

☒

Listen and understand

☒

Guide or look for help

Every school has a person in charge of child safeguarding. This person is called the **Designated Liaison Person or DLP**. The DLP for our school is

Insert **name** and **photo** of the Designated Liaison Person. Display this poster, with the child safeguarding statement, at an **appropriate height** for students to view. It is open to schools to print on plain white or coloured paper, on either an A3 or A4 sized page and to translate to the home languages of the students.

In your day-to-day role, what steps could you take to ensure that the key messages of the Student Friendly Child Safeguarding Statement are known and understood by all children? e.g. classroom discussions, involving the student council, discussion of trusted adults in the school, and pointing out where the CSS is displayed at pupil eye level in the school.

Useful Supports



spectrum.life **Fóiláine le Chéile Wellbeing Together**

Employee Assistance Service.

The Employee Assistance Service is a free and confidential service that provides wellbeing support to teachers, SNAs and all school staff. This service is provided by Spectrum.Life.

Your Employee Assistance Service is available 24/7, 365 days a year, providing*:

- 'In The Moment' Support
- Online Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
- Referral to Counselling

*On the initial contact, our case manager will complete a quick assessment and when appropriate, referral to short term counselling will be made.

Register for your wellbeing app:
wellbeingtogether.spectrum.life/login
Organisation code: yVlIU7

SMS:
Text 'HI' to 087 145 2056
WhatsApp:
Text 'HI' to 087 369 0010
Freephone IRE:
1800 411 057

Scan the QR Code to learn more

An Roinn Óideachais
Department of Education



www.gov.ie

Useful Websites

www.gov.ie/childprotectionschools

www.tusla.ie

www.oide.ie



General queries: childprotection@education.gov.ie

Reflection

As you progress through the day capture your thoughts below

Things that I have learned

Actions I will take

Questions I have



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