



Loreto College Swords

Confidentiality Policy

March 2021

School Name	Loreto College Swords
Purpose:	<p>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.</p>
Context:	<p>Our school is a Voluntary secondary school in the Catholic Tradition for girls. It is managed by a Board of Management under the Trusteeship of the Loreto Education Trust. Loreto / IBVM education values and respects each student and seeks to educate all irrespective of ability in an open learning environment.” (Kolkata Guidelines: Page 6)</p> <p>In Loreto College, we endeavour to ensure that our school is experienced “as a caring Christian Community in which students have the opportunity to achieve academic excellence (fulfil one’s potential) and to grow spiritually, emotionally, socially, creatively and physically in a healthy environment.”</p> <p>All Loreto schools share the same set of values: freedom, justice, sincerity, truth and joy. These values are at the heart of our educational philosophy and shape our identity as a school.</p> <p>This confidentiality policy is written in the context of contemporary legislation and other relevant publications. Confidence is both a privilege and a duty. People of all ages may expect adherence to, and are expected to adhere to, the principle that issues of a private nature, and issues discussed in private, should not be divulged to others without valid consent.</p> <p>Taken together, this means that we</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the meaning of confidentiality. • Care for our students and for each other. • Respect students’ privacy and that of their families. • Are sensitive to the needs of students in all interactions, both in the classroom and in daily life. • Share relevant information only. • Are aware of the particular circumstances under which confidentiality is maintained by staff with student-support responsibilities, such as the guidance counsellor, chaplain, care team, year head etc.
Confidentiality & the role of staff:	<p>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.</p> <p>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 where a student’s welfare is at risk.</p> <p>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:</p>

	<p>(i) The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) in our school: Mr Peter Macnamara, Principal of the school.</p> <p>(ii) The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL) in our school: Ms Sharon Gunn, Deputy Principal of the school.</p> <p>(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 the by contacting the local social work office. Contact details for offices should be inserted here. This information can be found at https://www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare/contact-a-social-worker/</p> <p>(iv) 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.</p> <p>(v) 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.</p> <p>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.</p>
Additional information for learners under 18 years of age:	<p>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 –</p> <p>(a) if by doing so, the child will be placed at further risk</p> <p>(b) in cases where the family's knowledge of the report could impair Tusla's ability to carry out a risk assessment</p> <p>(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.</p>
Confidentiality and learners over 18:	<p>It is recognised 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.</p>
Links between this policy and other policies:	<p>This policy should be read in conjunction with Loreto College's policies on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Child Protection Policy ● Admissions Policy ● Data Protection Policy ● Whole School Guidance Plan ● Code of Behaviour

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Bullying Policy • Substance Abuse Policy • Health and Safety Policy • Acceptable Use Policy – Computers and Mobile Phones • Critical Incident Management Plan <p>A list of the outside agencies and bodies that students maybe referred to are available in the Whole School Guidance Plan.</p>
Record keeping:	<p>Our school recognises the importance of record keeping.</p> <p>Our school keeps records in accordance with Appendix 4 of the DES Child Protection Procedures in Primary and Post-primary (2017)</p> <p>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. Further details of our record keeping policies are available in the Whole School Guidance Plan.</p>
The Limits of Confidentiality:	<p>Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. 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.</p> <p>The Children First Guidance (2017) and other child protection guidelines have been adopted by the board of management of the school and must be applied as appropriate. This includes a legal obligation to share information where a student’s welfare is at risk.</p> <p>Guidance counsellors (and others) take all reasonable steps to preserve the confidentiality of information about students in the course of their professional work. They reveal such information only with the students consent, but with certain exceptions, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -where concealment would result in danger to the student or others; -when required by Law or designated guidelines, for example the ‘Child Protection Guidelines; -for the purposes of professional supervision (Institute of Guidance Counsellors; Code of Ethics). <p>It is important that it is made clear to students and staff that while confidentiality is preserved, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed at all times. There are limits to confidentiality.</p> <p>Under Child Protection Guidelines concerns are shared on a ‘need to know basis’ with the ‘Designated Liaison Person’ who is the Principal. Sharing such concerns is not regarded as a breach of confidentiality. This is only done for the protection and safety of the student or other person/s and it is done purely for reasons of care.</p> <p>We also have to acknowledge our own professional limitations and there are situations where expert advice and help must be sought in everyone’s best interests, that is to say, in the best interests of the individual student and the parents/guardians who have a legal right to information if the student is below 18 years of age. If the student is over the age of 18 consent must be given by the student.</p> <p>In relation to other issues, not of a child protection nature, consent is given by the student to speak to Parents and inform teachers and staff.</p>
Communicating the limits to	<p>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.</p>

confidentiality with staff:	Staff should consult a member of management if they have any questions or concerns about our school's confidentiality policy. For staff, members of the Pastoral Care team should be made aware of any student who has disclosed difficulties to them.
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. Parents are free to contact the Guidance Counsellor by phone or in person to make an appointment, should they have any queries or concerns about their daughter. The Guidance counsellor is available at each Parent-Teacher meeting to meet any parents if they so wish.
What to do when an issue arises:	The School Referral Procedures document below provides 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.
Responsibilities in relation to the policy:	This policy was developed by the Guidance Counselling department in conjunction with the Management and Pastoral Care Team, Staff, the Student Council and the Parents Association. The confidentiality policy will be reviewed in line with the school's programme of school development planning and as part of the School Self Evaluation process. It will be ratified by the Board of Management and reviewed by them every 3 years from the time of ratification.
Accessibility:	This policy is available on the www.loretoswords.ie website. A hardcopy is available in the general office and the Career Guidance Office.
Date policy ratified by BOM:	23 rd March 2021 (by zoom meeting)
Date for review of policy:	March 2024
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.

Signed: _____
Gerry Sinnott, Chairperson

Signed _____
Secretary, Board of Management

