

Garda Vetting Policy

March 2021

Whitechurch National School

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Chairperson

Rev. Canon A. H. McKinley

Principal

Ms. Sarah Richards

Deputy Principal

Ms. Judy Brown

Garda Vetting Policy

The Garda Vetting Policy operates in conjunction with the Child Protection Policy which serves to ensure the safety of all children in the school.

The staff and Board of Whitechurch National School endeavour to keep potential unsupervised access to children to a minimum. This is as much for the safety of the children as for the adults who may find themselves on their own with a child or children. The Board and staff fully recognise the limitations of Garda Vetting and realise that it does not provide clearance for any individual. However in the interest of best practice, it is the policy of Whitechurch National School to Garda Vet any individual who may find themselves in a position on their own with a child or children. This includes non-teaching staff and outside subject specialists. Parents of children who attend the school are also requested to undergo the process of Garda Vetting in light of the many instances where parental involvement with school activities may take place eg. school trips, sporting activities, assisting with reading, school fundraising efforts etc.

Ref. also Circular 0031/2016, Whitechurch National School Data Protection Policy, Whitechurch National School Child Protection Policy, Whitechurch National School Statutory Declaration Form.

Aims of the Policy

- To ensure that the school is a safe and secure environment for the children in our school.
- To adhere to Garda Vetting procedures as part of the wider process ensuring the protection and safety of all members of the school community.
- To enable parents to become more actively involved in the school through volunteering for various activities.

What is Garda Vetting?

The process of Garda Vetting is carried out by the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU). The function of the GCVU is to provide details of 'all prosecutions,

successful or not, pending or completed, and/ or convictions' in respect of an applicant to a registered organisation.

Procedure

For teachers, the application for Garda vetting is made through the Teaching Council. Once a teacher has Garda vetting confirmation, they can then share their Garda vetting confirmation link with the school. The teacher is also required to complete a Form of Undertaking. The applicant completes the Garda Vetting invitation form, which is then sent to an Authorised Signatory in the Church Of Ireland Board of Education. The Garda Vetting form is then forwarded to the GCVU. A copy of photo ID and proof of address are retained by the school. All employees of the school must also complete a Form of Undertaking (this does not apply to parent volunteers). All rules of Data Protection will be observed in respect of any data received following a Garda Vetting;

- Information will be obtained and processed fairly
- Information will be kept for a specified, explicit and lawful purpose
- Use of and disclosure of information obtained occurs only in ways compatible with these purposes
- Information will be kept safe and secure
- It will be retained only while necessary for the purpose obtained
- Information received from the Vetting Unit will be shared with the individual at their request.

All offers of employment to non-teaching staff and volunteers are 'subject to satisfactory vetting by the Garda vetting Unit' before employment commences. Teaching staff are vetted separately by the Teaching Council.

Failure to complete the Garda Vetting invitation form will automatically disqualify the candidate. The provision of inaccurate information on the Garda Vetting form, such as inaccurate date of birth or address, may also disqualify.

Candidates will be able to challenge the information provided by the GCVU especially to avoid errors or cases of mistaken identity. In such cases re-vetting will take place.

Decisions on whether to accept an applicant will involve consideration of a number of criteria as well as the Garda Vetting findings. In the case of convictions, cognisance will be taken of the nature and dates of the conviction, restorative justice and rehabilitation of offenders. The Chairperson of the Board of Management and the Principal will meet to take a decision on applicants where a Garda Vetting form has been returned with a conviction. The Chairperson of the Board of Management and the Principal may request that the applicant meet with them to clarify aspects of their returned form. Any decision taken at this stage will be recorded and brought to the attention of the Board of Management. In all decisions, it is recognised that the school will take as its first priority its responsibility to the protection of children attending school activities.

Statutory Vetting where two or more relevant organisations are involved eg. student teachers

Circular 0031/2016 allows for a third level college to provide confirmation to the school that a student teacher is garda vetted. This rule also applies to sports coaches and guest speakers from outside organisations.

The Vetting Act provides that in cases where two or more relevant organisations have jointly agreed in writing to the employment, contract, placement or permission

of a person to undertake relevant work or activities, it shall be a defence in any prosecution under Section 12 of the Act to show that the other organisation who was a party to the agreement had received a vetting disclosure from the Bureau in respect of the person.

Training and familiarisation with child protection policies

The school will provide opportunities for training for parents, outside specialist teachers, and volunteers who wish to avail of it. The school will ensure that any parents who volunteer to help in the school are familiar with the Child Protection Policy in operation at the school. All outside specialist teachers will also be required to sign a Form of Undertaking in addition to Garda Vetting and familiarisation with the school's Child Protection policy and procedures.

Appendices: Circular 0031/2016, Circular 0031/2016 FAQs, vetting invite form, Form of Undertaking.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____ [date].

Signed: _____ Signed: _____

Chairperson of Board of Management Principal

Date: _____ Date: _____