

## **Scoping Inquiry into Historical Sexual Abuse in Schools run by Religious Orders**

### **Scoping Inquiry Report sent to the Minister for Education on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

Today all of us are listening to numerous commentaries on the Scoping Inquiry report in schools run by religious orders in Ireland, the Society of Mary among them. The report shines a light on the reality and the figures are truly shocking. Nothing compares to the suffering inflicted on the victims of abuse, and we offer our heartfelt apologies to them. The Marist Fathers are indebted to all those who have spoken out courageously and witnessed to the devastation these actions caused them.

The behaviour of some religious casts a dark shadow on our congregation. It is essential for us to both listen to victims of abuse and learn from them the impact these actions have on their lives (Provincial Chapter Statement 2022). The Marist Fathers unequivocally condemns all forms of sexual abuse that took place in our schools. The rights and human dignity of all persons, especially children, who are members of the school community under our patronage must be protected and the welfare and safety of each person, especially the child and young adult, must be prioritised.

The Marist Fathers wishes to ensure that our schools today are safe places for all, and conform to the highest standards of child safeguarding, alongside the continuing to develop a culture of care, openness and transparency, accountable to the statutory agencies. Rather than protecting the institution, our response to abuse allegations is grounded in the gospel and human values of authenticity, truth, justice, openness, transparency and accountability.

To ensure that the horrific abuses that occurred in the past will never be repeated, all schools have a Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy in place and report annually to their patron confirming that this policy has been reviewed and that a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is available to students and staff to report any incidents of concern. The Department of Education carries out regular Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections (CPSI) in schools and issued updated procedures to all schools in 2023.

The Marist Fathers co-operated fully with the Scoping Inquiry and supplied the information required as comprehensively and honestly as possible to compile the report. We will continue to cooperate fully with any future inquiries or investigations.

In the full knowledge that words are inadequate, we state our hope, that by humbly acknowledging fully that our failings contributed to the injustice in the past, this will contribute to promoting the care and wellbeing of those hurt by these actions.