



CHILD SAFE POLICY

St Mary MacKillop College

St Mary MacKillop College aims to nurture the development of the whole person by empowering our students to make a positive contribution to the world. As a College we respect the unique dignity and faith of each person and strive to achieve the best outcome for each individual student in a safe and caring environment.

PURPOSE OR RATIONALE

This policy was written to demonstrate the strong commitment of the whole school community of St Mary MacKillop College, leaders, staff, volunteers, students, their families to child safety and to provide an outline of the policies and procedures developed to keep everyone safe from harm, including all forms of abuse.

St Mary MacKillop College requires that their child safety policy and practices embed a culture of child safety through leadership, ensure the proactive management of child abuse risks and/or allegations of abuse, provide for child participation and empowerment and engage the whole school community in a proactive approach to the care, wellbeing and protection of children and young people.

This Policy outlines how St Mary MacKillop College strives to build a culture of child safety across the whole school community.

COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

All students enrolled, and any child visiting, have a right to feel safe and be safe while at school or involved in school based activities. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we do not and will not tolerate child abuse. We aim to create a child-safe and child-friendly environment where children are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety. There is particular attention paid to the most vulnerable children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with a disability.

Our commitment to our students

- (a) We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people enrolled in our school.
- (b) We commit to providing children and young people with positive and nurturing experiences.
- (c) We commit to listening to children and young people and empowering them by taking their views seriously, and addressing any concerns that they raise with us.
- (d) We commit to taking action to ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse or harm.
- (e) We commit to teaching children and young people the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing.
- (f) We commit to seeking input and feedback from students regarding the creation of a safe school environment.

Our commitment to and with parents and carers

- (a) We commit to communicating honestly and openly with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children.
- (b) We commit to engaging with, and listening to, the views of parents and carers about our child-safety practice, policies and procedures.
- (c) We commit to transparency in our decision-making with parents and carers where it will not compromise the safety of children or young people.
- (d) We commit to acknowledging the cultural diversity of students and families, and being sensitive to how this may impact on student safety issues.
- (e) We commit to continuously reviewing and improving our systems to protect children from abuse.

Our commitment to our school staff (school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy)

- (a) We commit to providing all staff with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles. This will include regular and appropriate learning opportunities.
- (b) We commit to providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm policy and procedures in relation to child safety and young people's protection and wellbeing. This will include annual training in the principles and intent of the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct, and staff responsibilities to report concerns.
- (c) We commit to listening to all concerns voiced by staff, clergy, volunteers, and contractors about keeping children and young people safe from harm.
- (d) We commit to providing opportunities for school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS TO SAFETY AND PARTICIPATION

The staff and volunteers of St Mary MacKillop College encourage students to express their views. We listen to their suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them. We actively encourage all students to openly express their views and feel comfortable about giving voice to the things that are important to them.

We teach students about what they can do if they feel unsafe. We listen to and act on any concerns students, or their parents or carers, raise with us.

Students at St Mary MacKillop College have access to an online Bullying report form as well as complete a Safe Schools survey that allows them to express their levels of safety with the school environment.

VALUING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

We value and celebrate diversity, especially cultural diversity, and we do not tolerate discriminatory practices. To achieve this, we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students and their families
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) and their families
- promote the personal safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability and make them feel welcome and part of all aspects of school life

RECRUITING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

St Mary MacKillop College will apply the most thorough and rigorous standards in the recruitment and screening of staff and volunteers. We interview and conduct referee checks on all staff and volunteers and require police checks and Working With Children Checks (WWCC) for all staff and volunteers. Our commitment to Child Safety and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements for staff and volunteer positions.

As a College we make it a priority that all staff and new staff complete the Mandatory Reporting online module before entering the classroom or school environment.

SUPPORTING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

St Mary MacKillop College provides support and supervision to all staff and volunteers so people feel valued, respected, affirmed in their work and fairly treated. We have a Code of Conduct to provide guidance to our staff and volunteers, all of whom receive training on the requirements of the Code.

The Code of Conduct document is presented to staff and all staff receive a copy of the code of conduct.

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CHILD SAFETY

Principal:

- has an overall leadership role in monitoring and responding to the policy, procedures and practices for child safety in the school.
- ensures the school meets the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in [Ministerial Order No. 870](#)
- ensures that the school's child safety policies, practices, procedures and record keeping are at all times compliant with the CECV Child Safe Standards: Compliance Assessment Tool
- promotes a culture of openness, awareness of and shared responsibility for child safety
- provides an annual budget allocation for regular training and education in order to understand individual responsibilities in relation to child safety and the wellbeing of children and young people.
- allocates resources and support to assist in meeting the learning and wellbeing needs of all students
- implements processes to monitor and update the register for training/professional learning for staff, volunteers, contractors and clergy and School Advisory Council (SAC)
- ensures there are processes to monitor and update the register for VIT registration and Working With Children Checks
- implements employment procedures consistent with CECV Guidelines for Employment of Staff in Catholic Schools
- implements the *CECV Guidelines on the engagement of volunteers in Catholic schools* and CECV Guidelines for Engagement of Contractors
- ensures school website and newsletter has information to keep parents and carers informed of policy and procedures
- upholds high principles and standards for all staff, clergy, volunteers, and contractors of child safety commitments, procedures and arrangements
- promotes models of behaviour between adults and children and young people based on mutual respect and consideration
- promotes student empowerment and participation in policies and curriculum design

- provides regular opportunities to clarify and confirm legislative obligations, policy and procedures in relation to child and young people's protection and wellbeing
- undertakes effective risk management assessment, strategies for monitoring and reviewing the risk register and that staff are informed of strategies to mitigate risks as well as policy, procedures and practices to support child safety
- includes child safety as a standing agenda item for staff and SAC meetings and provides regular updates on the implementation of child safety
- ensures the school takes specific action to protect children from abuse in line with the three new criminal offences introduced under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.) and in line with the [PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#)
- records any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and stores the records in accordance with security and privacy requirements.
- follows the step-by-step guide to making a report as outlined in [PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#)
- follows procedures, when required, for reportable conduct

Child Safety Officer and Team:

- A Child Safety Team assists the principal. Where appropriate to the size of the school, the team will include:
 - Child Safety Officer
 - Pastoral Care and Wellbeing Leader
 - Staff Representative
- The Child Safety Officer has a role description that is available on school website and in the staff and parent handbooks
- The Child Safety Officer will participate in the diocesan child protection network
- The Child Safety Team works in collaboration with the Risk Management Committee in identifying and mitigating risks in child safety.
- The Child Safety Team is responsible for informing staff, students and school community on policies, procedures and practices and identifying professional learning.

Staff

- ensure students are treated with dignity and respect, acting with propriety, providing a duty of care, and protecting children and young people in their care
- assist children and young people to develop positive, responsible and caring attitudes and behaviours which recognise the rights of all people to be safe and free from abuse
- provide a physically and psychologically safe environment where the wellbeing of children and young people is nurtured
- undertake regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to child safety and the wellbeing of children and young people
- undertake and implement professional learning such as the Principle of Inclusion, resilience, behaviour management, healthy and respectful relations, critical incidents, pastoral care and child abuse awareness and preventions
- ensure curriculum design integrates appropriate knowledge and skills to enhance student's understanding of being safe and engages them in curriculum design
- implement teaching and learning strategies that acknowledge and support student empowerment and participation

- follow the legislative and internal school processes in the course of their work, if they form a reasonable belief that a child or young person has been or is being abused or neglected
- follow the step-by-step guide to making a report as outlined in [PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#)
- follow the St Mary MacKillop College Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- remain familiar with the relevant laws, the code of conduct, and policies and procedures in relation to child protection and to comply with all requirements.

Volunteers/ Clergy and Contractors

- participate in school requirements for induction and ongoing training in child safety
- be familiar with the relevant laws, the code of conduct, and policies and procedures in relation to child protection and to comply with school requirements
- ensure students are treated with dignity and respect
- follow school policies and procedures including those for signing-in and out
- follow the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct
- report immediately any concerns or issues regarding child safety to principal or staff member

School Advisory Council (SAC):

- undertakes regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to child safety and the wellbeing of children and young people
- has child safety as a standing item on the SAC agenda
- advises the principal on school policy for child safety

REPORTING A CHILD SAFETY CONCERN OR COMPLAINT

Our school records any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Code of Conduct, and store the records in accordance with security and privacy requirements. Our complaints and disclosure processes are outlined and detailed in the following policies and procedures:

- BDSAC- Protocol for managing allegations of abuse of students policy (Knowledge Banks)
- BDSAC Child Protection Policy (Knowledge Banks)
- BDSAC External Complaints Policy (Knowledge Banks)
- Concerns and Complaints Policy (Knowledge Banks)
- Concerns and Complaints Procedure (Knowledge Banks)

The Director of Wellbeing has been appointed as Child Safety Officer with specific responsibility for responding to any complaints made by staff, volunteers, parents or students in relation to Child Safety.

At St Mary MacKillop College if any member of our school community has concerns for a child's safety, they need to discuss and report this to the school principal or the child safety officer.

If either the principal or child safety officer are not available and the matter is urgent then it should be reported to a staff member (All staff members are obliged to assist with child safety).

The principal, child safety officer or staff member will follow the step-by-step guide to making a report as outlined in PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools.

BREACH OF POLICY

Where an **employee** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this Policy, St Mary MacKillop College may start the process under clause 13 of the *Victorian Catholic Education Multi Enterprise Agreement 2018* (VCEMEA) for managing employment concerns. This may result in disciplinary consequences.

Where the **principal** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the concerned party is advised to contact the Governing Authority, Father Matthew Thomas.

Where any **other member of the school community** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the school is to take appropriate action, including in accordance with St Mary MacKillop College Reporting Obligations 2019 and the St Mary MacKillop College Concerns and Complaints Policy.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk management is an approach that minimises the potential for child abuse or harm to occur. Our Risk Management Plan (*refer to Risk Management plan in Knowledge Bases*) outlines and details all aspects of risk across our whole school environment (on site and off site school activities) with specific activity risk assessments. A *Child Safety Risk Register* is also completed annually. In addition to our general Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse and harm to our students.

POLICY REVIEW

St Mary MacKillop College is committed to continuous improvement of our child safety systems and practices. We intend the implementation and monitoring of child safe procedures to be a dynamic and ongoing process. For this reason, all child safety policies and procedures will be reviewed at least annually, and we will undertake to seek feedback from students, parents, carers, staff and volunteers.

Policy Ratified: November 2020

Next Review Date: November 2021