

ST JOSEPH'S COLLEGE GEELONG
POLICY 3.9 CHILD SAFETY

INTRODUCTION

Background

1. At St Joseph's College we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of our College. Our commitment is drawn from and inherent in the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the gospel (CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety).

The person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ's teaching: that is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school.

(Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, n. 9).

2. CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety is attachment 1.

3. Edmund Rice Education Australia has also stated their Commitment to Child Safety which complements this policy and this is attachment 2.

Rationale

4. The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the strong commitment of St Joseph's College to the care, safety and wellbeing of all students at our College. It provides an outline of the policies, procedures and strategies developed to keep students safe from harm, including all forms of abuse in our school environment, on campus, online and in other locations provided by the College.

5. This policy takes into account relevant legislative requirements within the state of Victoria, including the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in Ministerial Order No. 870.

6. This policy applies to College staff, including College employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy.

POLICY

Guiding Principles

7. Catholic schools have a moral, legal and mission-driven responsibility to create nurturing school environments where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard and they are safe and feel safe (CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety)

8. The following principles underpin our commitment to child safety at St Joseph's College:

- a. All students deserve, as a fundamental right, safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect.
- b. Our College works in partnership with families and the community to ensure that they are engaged in decision-making processes, particularly those that have an impact on child safety and protection.
- c. All students have the right to a thorough and systematic education in all aspects of personal safety, in partnership with their parents/guardians/caregivers.
- d. All adults in our College, including teaching and non-teaching staff, clergy, volunteers, and contractors, have a responsibility to care for children and young people, to positively promote their wellbeing and to protect them from any kind of harm or abuse.

- e. The policies, guidelines and codes of conduct for the care, wellbeing and protection of students are based on honest, respectful and trusting relationships between adults and children and young people.
- f. Policies and practices demonstrate compliance with legislative requirements and cooperation with the Church, governments, the police and human services agencies.
- g. All persons involved in situations where harm is suspected or disclosed must be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect.
- h. Staff, clergy, volunteers, contractors, parents and students should feel free to raise concerns about child safety, knowing these will be taken seriously by College leadership.
- i. Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained, with information being provided to those who have a right or a need to be informed, either legally or pastorally.

Definitions used in this Policy

9. The definitions of terms used in this policy are:
- a. **Child:** A child or a young person enrolled as a student at the school.
 - b. **Child abuse** includes:
 - (1) any act committed against a child involving:
 - (a) a sexual offence
 - (b) an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
 - (2) the infliction, on a child, of:
 - (a) physical violence
 - (b) serious emotional or psychological harm
 - (3) serious neglect of a child. (Ministerial Order No. 870)
 - c. **Child safety** encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse. (Ministerial Order No. 870)
 - d. **Child neglect:** Includes a failure to provide the child with an adequate standard of nutrition, medical care, clothing, shelter or supervision to the extent that the health and physical development of the child is significantly impaired or placed at serious risk. (PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools).
 - e. **Child physical abuse:** Generally, consists of any non-accidental infliction of physical violence on a child by any person. (PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools).
 - f. **Child sexual abuse:** Is when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve them in sexual activity. It can include a wide range of sexual activity and does not always involve physical contact or force. (PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools).
 - g. **Emotional child abuse:** Occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats, or by witnessing family violence. (PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools).
 - h. **Grooming:** Is when a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later date. It can include communication and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or

their parent/carer. (PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools).

- i. **Mandatory Reporting:** The legal requirement under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)* to protect children from harm relating to physical and sexual abuse. The principal, teachers, medical practitioners and nurses at a school are mandatory reporters under this Act. (PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools).
- j. **Reasonable Belief:** When school staff are concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person, they must assess that concern to determine if a report should be made to the relevant agency. This process of considering all relevant information and observations is known as forming a 'reasonable belief'. A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumour or speculation. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. (PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools)
- k. **School environment** means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:
 - (1) a campus of the school
 - (2) online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
 - (3) other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events). (Ministerial Order No. 870)
- l. **School staff** means an individual working in a school environment who is:
 - (1) directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
 - (2) a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)
 - (3) a minister of religion. (Ministerial Order No. 870)

Policy Commitments

10. All students enrolled at St Joseph's College have the right to feel safe and be safe. 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.

11. **Our commitment to our students:**

- a. We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people enrolled in our College.
- 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.

12. **Our commitment to 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.

13. **Our commitment to our school staff (school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy):**

- a. We commit to providing all St Joseph's College 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 St Joseph's College staff, clergy, volunteers, and contractors about keeping children and young people safe from harm.
- d. We commit to providing opportunities for St Joseph's College school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.

Responsibilities and Organisational Arrangements

14. Everyone employed or volunteering at St Joseph's College has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all students is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make. (CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety)

15. The College has allocated roles and responsibilities for child safety as follows.

- a. **Responsibilities of College Leadership.** The principal, the College governing authority and College leaders at St Joseph's College recognise their particular responsibility to ensure the development of preventative and proactive strategies that promote a culture of openness, awareness of and shared responsibility for child safety. Responsibilities include:
 - (1) creating an environment for children and young people to be safe and to feel safe,
 - (2) upholding high principles and standards for all staff, clergy, volunteers, and contractors,
 - (3) promoting models of behaviour between adults and children and young people based on mutual respect and consideration,
 - (4) ensuring thorough and rigorous practices are applied in the recruitment, screening and ongoing professional learning of staff,

- (5) ensuring that College personnel have regular and appropriate learning to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters,
 - (6) providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm legislative obligations, policy and procedures in relation to child and young people's protection and wellbeing,
 - (7) ensuring the College meets the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in Ministerial Order No. 870, and
 - (8) ensuring the College 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*.
- b. **Responsibilities of College Staff.** Responsibilities of College staff (College employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy) include:
- (1) treating children and young people with dignity and respect, acting with propriety, providing a duty of care, and protecting children and young people in their care;
 - (2) following the legislative and internal College 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;
 - (3) providing a physically and psychologically safe environment where the wellbeing of children and young people is nurtured;
 - (4) undertaking regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to child safety and the wellbeing of children and young people;
 - (5) assisting 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; and
 - (6) following the College's Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- c. **Child Safety Lead.** Responsibility for child safety is everyone's responsibility. To support the continual renewal and monitoring, the Deputy Principal Staff and Student Wellbeing will hold the role of Child Safety Lead. This role will be responsible for:
- (1) education and promotion of child safety within the College community,
 - (2) review of this policy, and
 - (3) revision of the Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- d. **Child Safety Committee.** The purpose of the Child Safety Committee is to ensure there is a healthy culture of child safety at St Joseph's College. The committee spend time reviewing and deliberating the seven Victorian Child Safe Standards which aim to improve the way the College provides services to children that prevent and respond to child abuse. A separate terms of reference is to be held for the committee.
- e. **Child Safety Officer.** The College will identify, train and promote staff to perform the role of Child Safety Officer. Supporting the Deputy Principal Staff and Student Wellbeing, their primary role is to provide advice on our Child Safety Policy, Child Protection Reporting obligations Policy and the Child Protection Program. Specifically:
- (1) Provide Authoritative Advice

- (a) Act as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of child safety.
 - (b) Liaise with the principal and College leaders to maintain the visibility of child safety.
 - (c) Support the College's child safety culture, including being a child safety champion and providing coordination in communicating, implementing, monitoring, enhancing and reporting on strategies to embed a culture of child safety.
- (2) Raise Awareness
- (a) Ensure the College's policies are known and used appropriately.
 - (b) Ensure the College's child safety policy is reviewed in the context of College self-evaluation undertaken as part of the College accountability framework.
 - (c) Ensure the child protection policy is available publicly and parents are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the College in this.
 - (d) Be alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers.
 - (e) Encourage among all staff a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings in any measures to protect them.
- (3) Train
- (a) Being authoritative in providing advice by:
 - i. keeping their skills up to date with appropriate training carried out every two years
 - ii. having a working knowledge of how the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Community Service Organisations conduct a child protection case conference to be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so.
 - (b) Be able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals.
 - (c) Ensure each member of staff has access to and understands the College's child safety policy and procedures, especially new and part time staff.
 - (d) Make sure staff are aware of training opportunities and the latest DHHS and DET policies and guidance.

Annual Child Safe Strategy Action Plan

16. To ensure the College is a Child Safe environment and is continually seeking to achieve the highest standards in Child Safety, strategies to embed a culture of child safety at the College need to be developed, implemented and reviewed. The Annual Child Safe Strategy Action Plan developed by the Child Safe Committee will guide the actions of the College. This will become a critical tool in informing the College community about the Child Safe Standard strategies and allocated roles and responsibilities.

17. The College must monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its strategies and risk controls and this will be programmed through the Annual Child Safe Strategy Action Plan along with critical checks of compliance with the Child Safe Standards.

Child Safety Code of Conduct

18. At St Joseph's College, we expect College employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy to proactively ensure the safety of students at all times and to take appropriate action if there are concerns about the safety of any child at the College. All College staff must 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.

19. We have developed a Child Safety Code of Conduct *Safeguarding Children and Young People* (attachment 3), which recognises the critical role that College staff play in protecting the students in our care and establishes clear expectations of College employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy for appropriate behaviour with children in order to safeguard them against abuse and or neglect.

20. Our Code also protects College staff through clarification of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

St Joseph's College Statement of Undertaking

21. The College has developed a clear statement of undertaking that will be promulgated in prominent locations and on College information forums.

Student Safety and Participation

22. At St Joseph's College, we actively encourage all students to openly express their views and feel comfortable about giving voice to the things that are important to them.

23. We teach students about what they can do if they feel unsafe and enable them to understand, identify, discuss and report on child safety. We listen to and act on any concerns students, or their parents or carers, raise with us.

Reporting and Responding

24. Our College 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. Our College complies with legal obligations that relate to managing the risk of child abuse under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)*, the *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.)* and the recommendations of the *Betrayal of Trust* report.

25. Child protection reporting obligations fall under separate pieces of legislation with differing reporting requirements.

26. Our College's Policy 3.1 *Child Protection – Reporting Obligations* sets out the actions required under the relevant legislation when there is a reasonable belief that a child at our College is in need of protection or a criminal offence has been committed, and provides guidance and procedures on how to make a report.

27. Our policy assists staff, volunteers and families to:

- a. identify the indicators of a child or young person who may be in need of protection;
- b. understand how a 'reasonable belief' is formed;
- c. make a report of a child or young person who may be in need of protection, and
- d. comply with mandatory reporting obligations under child protection law and their legal obligations relating to criminal child abuse and grooming under criminal law.

28. Our College has also established internal processes to ensure that appropriate action is taken to respond to concerns about the wellbeing and/or safety of a student. Every person involved in St Joseph's College has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they have individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

29. The Deputy Principal Staff and Student Wellbeing is supported in responding through the robust wellbeing structure in place at St Joseph's College. Once immediate health and safety

concerns have been addressed, the College staff member must take steps to report the incident, suspicion or disclosure of child abuse as soon as practicable. In all cases, College staff members must report internally to the Principal or, if the Principal is involved in the allegation, the Leadership Team.

30. Our complaints and disclosure processes are detailed in the College's assurance and compliance system *Complispace*.

Screening and Recruitment of College Staff

31. St Joseph's College will apply thorough and rigorous screening processes in the recruitment of employees and volunteers involved in child-connected work. Our commitment to child safety and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements for such employee, contractor and volunteer positions, and all successful applicants are provided with copies of the college's policies *Child Protection – Reporting Obligations*, *Child Safety* and the *Child Safety Code of Conduct*.

32. When recruiting and selecting employees, contractors and volunteers involved in child-connected work, we make all reasonable efforts to:

- a. confirm the applicant's Working with Children Check and National Police Check status and/or professional registration (as relevant)
- b. obtain proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications
- c. verify the applicant's history of work involving children
- d. obtain references that address the applicant's suitability for the job and working with children.

33. We have processes for monitoring and assessing the continuing suitability of College staff to work with children, including regular reviews of the status of Working with Children Checks and staff professional registration requirements such as Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration.

Child Safety – Education and Training for College Staff

34. St Joseph's College provides employees, volunteers and clergy with regular and appropriate opportunities to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters. This includes induction, ongoing training and professional learning to ensure that everyone understands their professional and legal obligations and responsibilities, and the procedures for reporting suspicion of child abuse and neglect.

35. Specifically, St Joseph's College Geelong will include training in staff induction and regular renewal at least annually to all staff. Any changes identified by the Child Safety Lead will be briefed to all staff and reinforced to the broader college community through the newsletter and website.

36. At least annually, the College will ensure that appropriate guidance and training is provided to the College staff about:

- a. the individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse
- b. the child abuse risks in the College environment
- c. the College's current child safe standards

37. A schedule for further training to be provided to existing staff, members of the governing authority and College boards, on an annual basis will be detailed in the Annual Child Safe Strategy Action Plan.

38. It is a requirement that all teachers and nominated non-teaching staff complete the DET *Protecting Children – Mandatory and other Legal Obligations*' eLearning module annually.

39. Additionally, all Child Safety Officers are to complete:

- a. Catholic Education Melbourne: *PROTECT: Identifying and responding to abuse*; and
- b. Commission For Children and Young People information sessions:

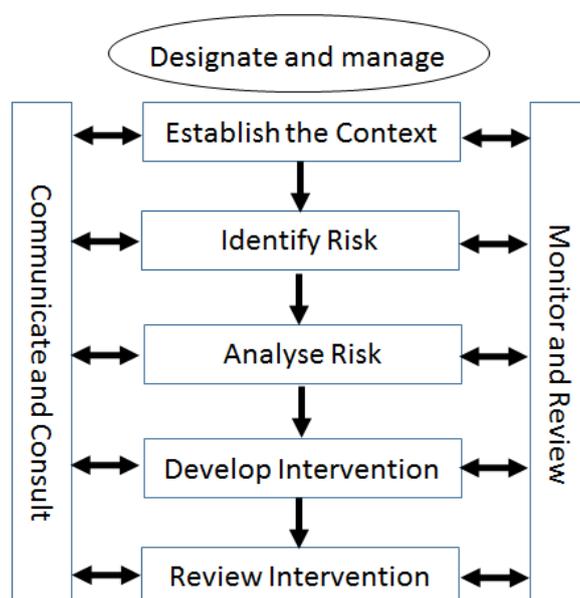
- (1) Child Safe Standards, and
- (2) Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Risk Management

40. Risk Management means identifying the potential for an incident or accident to occur and taking steps to reduce the likelihood or severity of its occurrence.

41. At St Joseph's College we are committed to proactively and systematically identifying and assessing risks to student safety across our whole College environment, and reducing or eliminating (where possible) all potential sources of harm. We document, implement, monitor and periodically review our risk management strategies for child safety and ensure that the strategies change as needed and as new risks arise.

42. The following is a diagram that illustrates the College's steps to ensure all risks are identified and addressed. These steps were taken from the Guide For Creating a Child Safe Organisation – Commission for Children and Young People / Victoria State Government 2015¹. Explanatory notes for the steps are at attachment 4.



43. The Child Safety Lead will regularly review the Child Safety environment and provide reports or new strategies to the risk subcommittee.

Relevant Legislation

44. The following relevant legislation is applicable:

- a. *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.)
- b. *Worker Screening Act 2020* (Vic)
- c. *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic.)
- d. *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic.)
- e. *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth)
- f. *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.) – Three new criminal offences have been introduced under this Act:
 - (1) Failure to disclose offence: Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 has

¹ <http://www.ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards.htm>

an obligation to report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence.

- (2) Failure to protect offence: The offence will apply where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation. A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- (3) Grooming offence: This offence targets predatory conduct designed to facilitate later sexual activity with a child. Grooming can be conducted in person or online, for example via interaction through social media, web forums and emails.

Related Catholic Education Melbourne Policies

45. The following Catholic Education Melbourne policies are applicable:

- a. *CECV Guidelines Relating to the Employment of Staff*
- b. *Policy 2.19: Child Protection – Reporting Obligations*
- c. *Policy 2.20: Complaints Policy*
- d. *Policy 2.26: Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools*
- e. *CECV Positive Behaviour Guidelines*

Related St Joseph’s College Policies

46. The following are related St Joseph’s College policies:

- a. *Policy 3.1 Child Protection – Reporting Obligations*
- b. *Policy 4.2 Bullying and Harassment Policy*
- c. *Policy 4.3 Equal Opportunity Policy*
- d. *Policy 4.4 Complaint Handling Procedure*
- e. *Policy 4.6 Code of Ethics/Professionalism Policy*

Consequences of Breaching this Policy

47. Where an employee is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this Policy, St Joseph’s 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.

48. Where the principal is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the concerned party is advised to contact the Chief Executive Officer, Edmund Rice Education Australia. Relevant notification should also be made to Catholic Education Melbourne (Office of Professional Conduct, Ethics and Investigation).

49. Where any other member of the College community is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the College is to take appropriate action, including in accordance with *Policy 3.1 Child Protection Reporting Obligations*, and *Policy 4.4 Complaint Handling Procedure* and/or contact Catholic Education Melbourne (Office of Professional Conduct, Ethics and Investigation).

CONCLUSION

50. The responsibility placed on schools to keep students safe from harm, including all forms of abuse in our school environment, on campus, online and in other locations provided by the school is implicit in the Catholic beliefs and practices.

Arise, for it is your task, and we are with you; be strong and do it.
(Ezra 10:4)

51. The College expects that all employees and volunteers will abide by this policy and all related policies.

Policy Review

52. At St Joseph's College we are committed to continuous improvement of our child safety systems and practices. We intend this policy to be a dynamic document that will be regularly reviewed to ensure it is working in practice and updated to accommodate changes in legislation or circumstance.

53. The custodian of this Policy is the Child Safety Lead. It will be reviewed at a minimum annually to take account of any changed legislation, expectations or practices.

Authority

54. This policy has been authorised by the St Joseph's College Advisory Council.

References

55. The following references are appropriate to this policy:
- a. Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) 2016, *Commitment Statement to Child Safety: A safe and nurturing culture for all children and young people in Catholic schools*.
 - b. Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) 2018, *Victorian Catholic Education Multi Enterprise Agreement 2018*, CECV.
 - c. Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, Vatican.
 - d. Department of Education, 2018, *PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools*.
 - e. State of Victoria 2016, *Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools: Ministerial Order No. 870*, Education & Training Reform Act 2006, Victorian Government Gazette No. S2.
 - f. Parliament of Victoria, Family and Community Development Committee, 2013, *Betrayal of Trust*.

Attachments:

1. CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety
2. EREA Commitment Statement to Child Safety
3. St Joseph's College Code of Conduct *Safeguarding Children and Young People*
4. St Joseph's College *Statement of Undertaking*
5. Explanatory notes Risk Management Strategy



CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety

A safe and nurturing culture for all children and young people in Catholic schools

The Statement is intended to provide the central focus for child safety¹ across Catholic education in Victoria, built around a unified understanding of the moral imperative and overarching commitments that underpin our drive for improvement and cultural change.

The Catholic school sets out to be a school for the human person and of human persons. The person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ's teaching: that is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school.

(Congregation for Catholic education 1997, par. 9)

The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) holds the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of Catholic education. This commitment is drawn from and inherent to the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the Gospel.

The CECV has a universal expectation for the protection of children. It is resolutely committed to ensuring that all those engaged in Catholic education in Victoria promote the inherent dignity of children and young people and their fundamental right to be respected and nurtured in a safe school environment. This is particularly so for the most vulnerable children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with a disability.

Catholic schools have a moral, legal and mission-driven responsibility to create nurturing school environments where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard and where they are safe and feel safe. When allegations of abuse concerning children and young people are raised, Catholic schools will take prompt action to have these appropriately referred and investigated. While the context and reality at each Catholic school will differ, the fundamental issues of understanding effective practices in child safety and identifying and responding to child harm remain the same. All schools must strive for continual improvement that is responsive to emerging thinking, evidence and practice, so as to eliminate the possibility of abuse occurring in the first place.

Creating child-safe school environments is a dynamic process that involves active participation and responsibility by schools, families and their communities. It is marked by collaboration, vigilance and proactive approaches across policies, procedures, curriculum and practices.

Every person involved in Catholic education has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

¹As defined by the Victorian Government Special Gazette No. 2 (2016), 'children and young people' in this document refers to those children and young people enrolled as students in Catholic schools in Victoria.





The CECV commits to providing **a safe and nurturing culture** for all children and young people in Victorian Catholic schools through:

1 Upholding the primacy of the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

At all times, the ongoing safety and wellbeing of all children and young people will be the primary focus of care and decision-making, with particular attention paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

To create and maintain a safe and nurturing culture, schools will actively and continually develop and review all policies, processes and practices, informed by emerging thinking and evidence.

2 Empowering families, children, young people and staff to have a voice and raise concerns.

Schools, in partnership with families, will ensure children and young people, are engaged and active participants in decision-making processes, particularly those that have an impact on their safety.

This means that the views of staff, children, young people and families are taken seriously and their concerns are addressed in a just and timely manner. Children and young people are also provided with the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing.

3 Implementing rigorous risk-management and employment practices.

Schools will systematically and continually identify and assess risks to child safety and will eliminate (where possible) or reduce all potential sources of harm. Effective risk management will be embedded in school life through effective, transparent and well-understood policies, procedures and practices.

Schools will employ highly competent and professional staff who are formed and challenged to maintain the safety of all students. The high-quality of staff appointments will be upheld through rigorous employment and staff review processes and practices.

Catholic education will stay abreast of current legislation and will meet their legislative duties to protect the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in their care, including the Victorian Child Safe Standards (Victorian Government 2016), mandatory reporting, grooming, failure to disclose and failure to protect requirements.

References

Congregation for Catholic education 1997, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, Vatican, Vatican City, accessed 24 February 2016 www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_27041998_school2000_en.html.

State of Victoria, Department of Education and Training 2016, *Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools Ministerial Order No. 870*, Education & Training Reform Act 2006, Gazette No. S2, accessed 16 May 2016 www.gazette.vic.gov.au/gazette/Gazettes2016/GG2016S002.pdf.

Edmund Rice Education Australia Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

All children and young people have a right to feel safe and be safe.

Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA) is committed to embedding a culture where the safety, wellbeing, and participation of all children and young people under our care is paramount. Particular attention is given to the needs of vulnerable children and young people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, children and young people with disability and mental health issues, children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, children and young people who are unable to live at home, and those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex. We are committed to at all times acting in the best interests of children and young people.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse and all allegations and safety concerns are treated very seriously and consistent with our robust safeguarding policies and procedures. EREA is committed to nurturing the wellbeing of all children and young people, respecting their dignity, ensuring their safety and protecting them from abuse and other harm. EREA, its schools and its staff, contractors and volunteers have legal and moral obligations to respond swiftly including contacting authorities where relevant when we are concerned about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

EREA and its schools demonstrate commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by:

- taking into consideration the views of children and young people about decisions that affect their safety and wellbeing;
- empowering children and young people by taking their views seriously, and addressing any concerns they may have;
- acknowledging the cultural diversity of families, and being sensitive to how this may impact on child safety;
- taking proactive steps to prevent child abuse, and identifying risks early so that such risks may be removed or reduced;
- involving families, carers and relevant communities in decision making processes that support the development of a child safe culture;
- continuously reviewing and improving our systems and practices to protect children and young people from abuse;
- providing children and young people with the knowledge and skills to understand and maintain their own personal safety;
- ensuring that EREA and its schools have in place strategies to embed and enhance a culture of child safety and wellbeing through the leadership, governance and culture of the organisation;
- applying robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff, contractors and volunteers;
- providing regular training and education on recognising the nature and indicators of child abuse and other harm, responding to safeguarding risks and how to build culturally safe environments for children and young people;
- implementing specific policies, procedures, training and a National Code of Conduct and a set of Child Safeguarding Standards to support the achievement of a child safe culture;
- listening to concerns about the safety of children, and suggestions to improve the child safety processes in place;
- responding swiftly to any child safety concerns and implementing clear procedures for managing and reporting child safety concerns; and
- ensuring that every person involved in EREA and its schools understands the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

Statement endorsed by the EREA Board 1 June 2020



St Joseph's College Code of Conduct Safeguarding Children and Young People

Arise, for it is your task, and we are with you; be strong and do it. (Ezra 10:4)

This Code of Conduct has a specific focus on safeguarding children and young people at St Joseph's College Geelong against sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect. It is intended to complement other professional and/or occupational codes.

All staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and board/school council members at St Joseph's College Geelong are expected to actively contribute to a school culture that respects the dignity of its members and affirms the Gospel values of love, care for others, compassion and justice. They are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below.

Acceptable behaviours

- ❖ Behave as a positive role model for students.
- ❖ Promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of students.
- ❖ Be vigilant and proactive with regard to student safety and child protection issues.
- ❖ Provide age-appropriate supervision for students.
- ❖ Comply with guidelines published by the School with respect to child protection.
- ❖ Treat all members of our community, including students, with dignity, respect, sensitivity and fairness.
- ❖ Promote the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability.
- ❖ Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of linguistically and culturally diverse students.
- ❖ Use positive and affirming language towards students.
- ❖ Encourage students to 'have a say', participate, and then listen to them with respect.
- ❖ Respect cultural, religious and political differences.
- ❖ Help provide an open, safe and supportive environment for all students to interact and socialise.
- ❖ Intervene when students are engaging in inappropriate bullying behaviour towards others or acting in a humiliating or vilifying way.
- ❖ Report any breaches of the Child Safe Code of Conduct.
- ❖ Report concerns about child safety to the School's Child Protection Officers and ensure that your legal obligations to report allegations externally are met.
- ❖ Ensure as quickly as possible that students involved in an allegation of child abuse are safe.
- ❖ Call the Police on 000 if you have immediate concerns for a student's safety.
- ❖ Respect the privacy of students and their families and only disclose information to people who have a need to know.

Unacceptable behaviours

- ❖ Engage in any form of inappropriate behaviour towards students or expose students to such behaviour.
- ❖ Use prejudice, oppressive behaviour or inappropriate language with students.

- ❖ Express personal views on or discriminate against any student based on culture, race, sexuality, ethnicity or disability.
- ❖ Engage in open discussions of an adult nature in the presence of students.
- ❖ Engage in any form of sexual conduct with a student including making sexually suggestive comments and sharing sexually suggestive material.
- ❖ Engage in inappropriate or unnecessary physical conduct or behaviours including doing things of a personal nature that a student can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes.
- ❖ Engage in any form of physical violence towards a student including inappropriately rough physical play.
- ❖ Use physical means or corporal punishment to discipline or control a student.
- ❖ Engage in any form of behaviour that has the potential to cause a student serious emotional or psychological harm.
- ❖ Develop 'special relationships' with students that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific students).
- ❖ Engage in private meetings with a student that is not your own child.
- ❖ Engage in inappropriate personal communications with a student through any medium, including any online contact or interactions with a student.
- ❖ Take or publish (including online) photos, movies or recordings of a student without parent/carer consent.
- ❖ Post online any information about a student that may identify them unless it is necessary for the school's activities or you have consent from the student and/or their parents/guardians. Identifying information includes things such as the student's full name, age, email address, telephone number, residence, school, or details of a club or group they may attend.
- ❖ Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

I, _____, confirm I have been read and understood my obligations under the above Code of Conduct.

Signature: _____ Date: _____



St Joseph's College Statement of Undertaking Protecting Our Children

How precious is Your loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings. (Psalm 36:7)

All students enrolled at St Joseph's College have the right to feel safe and be safe. 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:

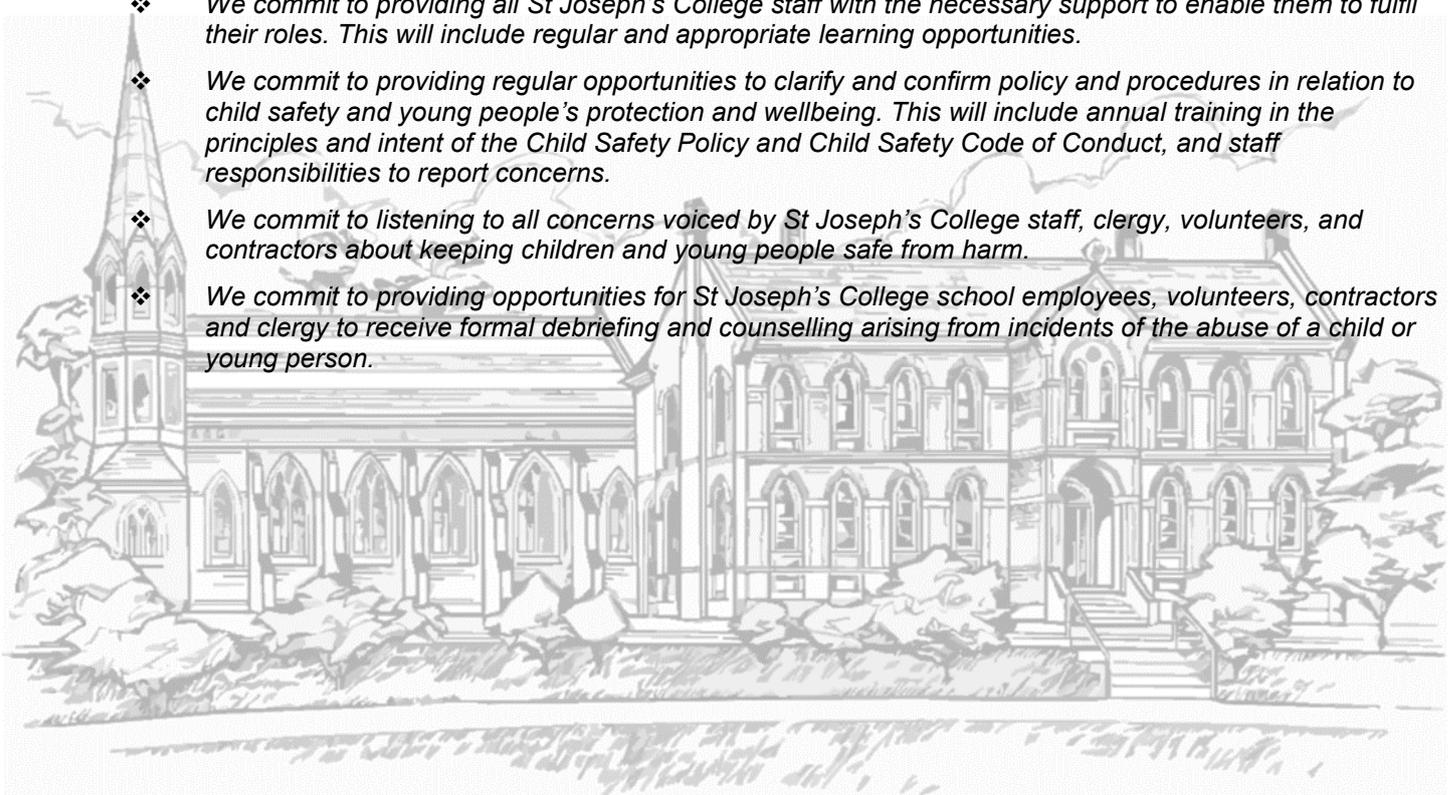
- ❖ *We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people enrolled in our school.*
- ❖ *We commit to providing children and young people with positive and nurturing experiences.*
- ❖ *We commit to listening to children and young people and empowering them by taking their views seriously,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

Our commitment to parents and carers:

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

Our commitment to our school staff:

- ❖ *We commit to providing all St Joseph's College staff with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles. This will include regular and appropriate learning opportunities.*
- ❖ *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.*
- ❖ *We commit to listening to all concerns voiced by St Joseph's College staff, clergy, volunteers, and contractors about keeping children and young people safe from harm.*
- ❖ *We commit to providing opportunities for St Joseph's College school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.*



Explanatory Notes Risk Management Strategy

The following paragraphs provide an explanation of the steps involved in the Risk Management Strategy. The diagram was adapted from the detail provided in the Guide For Creating a Child Safe Organisation – Commission for Children and Young People / Victoria State Government 2015². The explanatory notes are also drawn from that document.

Establish the context

- How does your organisation interact with children? Remember that different levels of risks are inherent in different types of activities.
- What governance and supervision structures are in place to prevent harm or abuse?
- Describe the children accessing your organisation. All children are vulnerable due to their developmental level; however, some children are particularly vulnerable. This may include children who have experienced trauma, abuse or neglect; Aboriginal children; and children with a disability.

How will you undertake the risk management plan?

- What approach will you adopt?
- Who will be involved?
- How long will it take?

Consult and communicate

- How will you let children, parents, carers, staff, volunteers and any other stakeholders know you are doing a risk management plan?
- How will you seek their views and input? How will you inform them about the plan?

Identify the risks

- These may range from occupational health and safety risks to child abuse and accidents.
- Do not forget to include risks related to the online environment.

Analyse the risks

- Consider the likelihood and consequence for children, your organisation, staff, volunteers and others if harm did occur.

Develop intervention

- What you can do to reduce the likelihood of risk?
- What would you need to do if the risk did occur?
- Changing the environment, putting preventative measures in place to make it harder for someone to perpetrate abuse and making it more likely that abuse will be discovered can also reduce the potential for abuse to occur.

Monitor and review

- Have a clear monitoring structure to record any risks that did eventuate, how effective the risk management plan was and how it can be improved.
- Have a set timeframe for reviewing this plan to incorporate these learnings.

Designate and manage

- Risk management should be a responsibility of a designated role within your organisation. This person must lead the child safety culture.

Risk Management means identifying the potential for an incident or accident to occur and taking steps to reduce the likelihood or severity of its occurrence.

² <http://www.ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards.htm>