



CHILD SAFETY POLICY [2017]

Rationale

The College is committed to ensuring the care, safety, and wellbeing of all students in our school. This policy seeks to develop strategies and procedures 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.

The Academy of Mary Immaculate has a zero tolerance policy for child abuse and is committed to promoting child safety, children's wellbeing and protecting children from abuse. We take into account the needs of all children (including but not limited to: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities and children who are vulnerable) when creating a child safe environment.

Definitions

Child: A child is a young person enrolled as a student in the school.

Child abuse includes:

- a. Any act committed against a child involving:
 - (i) A sexual offence
 - (ii) An offence under Section 49B(2) of the **Crimes Act 1958** (grooming)
- b. The infliction, upon a child, of:
 - (i) Physical violence
 - (ii) Serious emotional or psychological harm
- c. Serious neglect of a child (Ministerial Order No. 870)

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)

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.

Child physical abuse: Generally consists of any non-accidental infliction of physical violence on a child by any person.

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.

Emotional child abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats, or by witnessing family violence.

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.

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.

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 a 'reasonable belief'. A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof but is more than a 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.

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:

- a. A campus of the school
- b. Online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- c. 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).

College Staff means an individual in a school environment who is:

- a. Directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
- b. A volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)
- c. A minister of religion (Ministerial Order No. 870)

Guiding Principles

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 to Child Safety).

Within the framework of this policy is an adherence to the Victorian Child Safe Standards as follows:

CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

1. Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety
2. A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety
3. A child safety code of conduct
4. Screening, supervision, and training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse
5. Procedures for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
6. Strategies to reduce or remove risks of child abuse
7. Strategies to promote child participation and empowerment

As such, the following principles underpin our commitment to child safety at Academy of Mary Immaculate:

- All students deserve, as a fundamental right, safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect.
- Our school 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.
- All students have the right to a thorough and systematic education in all aspects of personal safety, in partnership with their parents/guardians/caregivers.
- All adults in our school, 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.
- 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.
- Policies and practices demonstrate compliance with legislative requirements and cooperation with the Church, governments, the police and human services agencies.
- All persons involved in situations where harm is suspected or disclosed must be treated with sensitivity, dignity, and respect.
- Staff, clergy, volunteers, contractors, parents, and students should feel free to raise concerns about child safety, knowing these will be taken seriously by school leadership.
- 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.

Procedures

Everyone employed or volunteering at the Academy of Mary Immaculate 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.

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

College Leadership Team

The Principal, the College governing authority and College leaders recognise their particular responsibility to ensure the development of preventative measures and proactive strategies that promote a culture of openness, awareness of and shared responsibility for child safety. Responsibilities include:

- Creating an environment for children and young people to be safe and to feel safe
- Upholding high principles and standards for all staff, clergy, volunteers and contractors
- Promoting models of behaviour between adults and children and young people based on mutual respect and consideration
- Ensuring thorough and rigorous practices are applied to the recruitment, screening and ongoing professional learning of staff
- Ensuring that College personnel have regular and appropriate learning to develop their knowledge of, openness to, and ability to address child safety matters
- Providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm legislative obligations, policy and procedures in relation to child and young people's protection and wellbeing
- Ensuring the College meets the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in Ministerial Order No. 870
- Offer opportunities for child participation and empowerment

- 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 *Protect: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools*.

College Staff

Responsibilities of College staff (College employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy, include:

- 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
- 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
- Providing a physically and psychologically safe environment where the wellbeing of children and young people is nurtured
- 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
- 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
- Following the College's Child Safety Code of Conduct.

Organisational Arrangements

The College Principal and the College Leadership Team have responsibility for consulting the College community and receiving communication about Child Safety.

Concerns and observations regarding suspected physical injury or sexual abuse of a child, or any other aspect of child safety are to be discussed with the Principal, a member of the College Leadership Team or the College Counsellor to ensure support is provided to all involved in matters of this nature. The confidentiality of these discussions must be maintained.

The Deputy Principal, with the support of the Student Wellbeing Team, have the responsibility for the organisation and delivery of appropriate and timely education sessions for College staff.

Any suspicion of child abuse is to be acted upon in accordance with the Catholic Education Office Melbourne (Policy 2.19) *Child Protection – Reporting Obligations* which has been adopted in full by the Academy and is known as the *Academy Child Protection – Reporting Obligation Policy*.

Expectation of Staff – Child Safety Code of Conduct

At the Academy of Mary Immaculate, we expect school 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 relating to child protection and comply with all requirements.

We have developed a Child Safety Code of Conduct which recognises the critical role that College staff play in protecting the students in our care and establishes clear expectations of school employers, volunteers, contractors, and clergy for appropriate behaviours with children in order to safeguard them against abuse and/or neglect.

Our code also protects staff through clarification of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

Student Safety and Participation

At the 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.

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, or their parents or carers, raise with us.

The College wellbeing System highlights the pastoral role of staff and includes the designated Homeroom Teachers, timetabled Positive Education and Extended Homeroom periods at Years 7 & 8 and Years 9-12 respectively, access to a Student Counsellor and Careers Practitioner, student forums and groups as well as providing information through a range of expert presenters and professionals.

The College adopts a three-tiered structure in delivering wellbeing and support to each student and enabling them to participate fully in the life of the College. In addition to class groups, homeroom and house groups provide the means by which quality interpersonal relationships can be established and maintained in the daily routine of the College. Through her interaction a vast array of activities, each Academy student has the opportunity to interact with all members of the College community and experience a sense of identity and worth.

The provision of the House System to complement the class group provides curriculum opportunities for students to participate in the recreational sporting and cultural activities of the College.

Reporting and Responding

Our school 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 school 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.

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

Our College's Child Protection-Reporting Policy, updated in July 2016, sets out the actions required under the relevant legislation when there is a reasonable belief that a child at our school is in need of protection or a criminal offence has been committed, and provides guidance and procedures on how to make a report.

Our policy assists staff, volunteers and families to:

- Identify the indicators of a child or young person who may be in need of protection
- Understand how a 'reasonable belief' is formed
- Make a report of a child or young person who may be in need of protection
- Comply with mandatory reporting obligations under child protection law and their legal obligations relating to criminal child abuse and grooming under criminal law

The rationale and aims for student wellbeing are contained in the College Wellbeing Policy which contains references to other policies relating to student wellbeing. Concerns relating to a child's general wellbeing are to be reported to the relevant homeroom teacher and/or Wellbeing Leader. Significant concerns regarding a child's safety should be reported immediately to a member of the College Leadership Team.

Our complaints and disclosure processes are outlined and detailed in the following policies and procedures:

Protect: identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools
College Wellbeing Policy

Screening and Recruitment of Staff

Academy of Mary Immaculate will apply thorough and rigorous screening processes in the recruitment of employees and volunteers involved in child-related work. Our commitment to child safety and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements for such employee, contractor and volunteer positions and all applicants are provided with copies of the College's Child Safety Code of Conduct and the Child Safety Policy.

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

- Confirm the applicant's Working with Children Check and National Police Check status and/or professional registration (as relevant)
- Obtain proof of personal identity and professional or other qualifications
- Verify the applicant's history of work involving children
- Obtain references that address the applicant's suitability for the job and working with children

We have processes for monitoring and assessing the continuing suitability of school 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 School Staff

Academy of Mary Immaculate provides employees, volunteers and clergy with regular and appropriate opportunities to develop their knowledge of and openness 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.

Staff meeting time is allocated each year to maintain ongoing commitment to education and professional development in this area. Induction for new staff highlights Child Safety processes and procedures of the College. Embedded within such professional development is direct reference to the Child Safe Standards

Risk Management

The College is committed to proactively and systematically identifying and assessing risks to student safety across our whole school 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.

The Deputy Principal, with the support of the Student Wellbeing Team have responsibility of periodically reviewing the risk management strategies for Child Safety. All members of the Student Wellbeing Team have a folder with the *Protect* documentation.

In particular, the development of wellbeing programs includes strategies to promote child participation and empowerment.

Related Documents

Protect: identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools found at:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/default.aspx?Redirect=1>

College Wellbeing Policy found at:

<http://simon.academy.vic.edu.au/WebModules/KnowledgeBanks/ViewKnowledgeBank.aspx?KnowledgeBank=26>

Academy of Mary Immaculate Child Safety Handbook

Date to be reviewed

Version	Author	Description of Changes	Release Date	Review Date
2	Paul Finneran	Added direct reference to Child Safety Standards	December 2017	December 2018
		A statement of commitment to child participation and empowerment (Standard 7)		