



Sacré Cœur

Child Safety Policy

Introduction

In our Sacred Heart School there has been a long tradition of particular care for every student. It is the policy of Sacré Cœur to live out the goals that reflect its Sacred Heart tradition. These goals are embodied in the Goals of Sacred Heart Education, which are:

1. A personal and active faith in God
2. A deep respect for intellectual values
3. The building of community as a Christian value
4. A social awareness that impels to action
5. Personal growth in an atmosphere of wise freedom

Within these five Sacred Heart goals students, staff and parents of Sacré Cœur should foster and promote the core school values of respect, compassion, responsibility, perseverance, forgiveness and integrity. Protection for children and young people is based upon the belief that each person is made in the image and likeness of God and that the inherent dignity of all should be recognised and fostered. Sacré Cœur is entrusted with the holistic education of each student in partnership with her parents, guardians and/or caregivers. Sacré Cœur staff therefore have a duty of care to our students by taking reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions which they can reasonably foresee would be likely to result in abuse of the student and to work for the positive wellbeing of the student.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the strong commitment of Sacré Cœur to the care, safety and wellbeing of all students at our school. 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 utilised by the school. 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](#). This policy applies to All Teaching Staff, General Staff, School Board members, Volunteers, Visitors, Clergy, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers.

1. 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 Statement to Child Safety](#)). The following principles underpin our commitment to child safety at Sacré Cœur.

- 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 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.

- The policies and practices demonstrate compliance with legislative requirements and co-operation 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.
- School 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.

2. Definitions used in this policy

Child	A child or a young person enrolled as a student at the school
Child abuse	(a) Any act committed against a child involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a sexual offence • an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming) (b) The infliction, on a child, of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical violence • 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. (PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools)
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)
Child sexual abuse	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)
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)
Grooming	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/caregiver. (PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools)
Mandatory Reporting	The legal requirement under the <i>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)</i> to protect children from harm relating to physical and sexual abuse. The principal, teachers, medical practitioners, nurses, counsellors, school psychologists and people in religious ministries at a school are mandatory reporters under this Act. (PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools)
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)

School environment	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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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)
School staff	An individual working in a school environment who is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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)

3. Policy Commitment

All students enrolled at Sacré Cœur have the right to feel safe and to 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

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

4. Responsibilities and Organisational Arrangements

Everyone employed or volunteering at Sacré Cœur 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](#)). The school has allocated roles and responsibilities for child safety as follows:

School Leadership

The Principal, School Board members and members of the School's Leadership Team at Sacré Cœur 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:

- 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 in the recruitment, screening and ongoing professional learning of staff
- Ensuring that school 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 School meets the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in [Ministerial Order No. 870](#).
- Ensuring 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](#).

School Staff

Responsibilities of school staff (school 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 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
- 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 School's [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#), Child Safety Policy and [Child Protection – Reporting Obligation Policy](#)

5. Organisational Arrangements

Sacré Cœur enacts this commitment to child safety through:

- Appointment of a Child Safety Officer who is the School's Director of Risk and Compliance
- A budget allocation to enable regular training and education in order to understand the responsibilities of all staff in relation to child safety and the wellbeing of children and young people
- Participation in the diocesan child protection network
- The use of school website and newsletter to remind and to keep parents/caregivers informed of child safety commitments, procedures and arrangements

6. Expectations of our School Staff – Child Safety Code of Conduct

At Sacré Cœur, it is expected that school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy are 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 school. All school 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. The School has developed a [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#) which recognises the critical role that school staff play in protecting the students in our care and establishes clear expectations of school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy for appropriate behaviour with children in order to safeguard them against abuse and or neglect. Our [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#) also protects school staff through clarification of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

7. Student Safety and Participation

At Sacré Cœur, 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 students, or their parents/caregivers raise with us.

8. Reporting and Responding

The 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. The 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.

The School's **Child Safety Officer** (Director of Risk and Compliance) plays an essential role in ensuring that Sacré Cœur is a child safe school.

The School's [Child Protection – Reporting Obligation Policy](#) sets out the actions required under the relevant legislation when there is a reasonable belief that a child at the 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
- Comply with legal obligations relating to criminal child abuse and grooming under criminal law.
- Comply with obligations under the Victorian reportable conduct scheme

Our school has also established internal processes aligned to the PROTECT protocol to ensure that appropriate action is taken to respond to concerns about the wellbeing and/or safety of a student through the following school staff members:

- Child Safety Officer / Director of Risk and Compliance
- A member of the Leadership Team

The School's complaints processes are outlined and detailed in the following policies:

- Feedback Policy
- Staff Whistleblower Policy

9. Screening and Recruitment of School Staff

Sacré Cœur will apply thorough and rigorous screening processes in the recruitment of employees and volunteers involved in child-connected work. The School's commitment to child safety and screening requirements are included in all advertisements for such employee, contractor and volunteer positions, and all applicants are provided with copies of the school's [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#), Child Safety Policy and [Child Protection – Reporting Obligation Policy](#).

When recruiting and selecting employees, contractors and volunteers involved in child-connected work, The School makes 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 any 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.

The School has 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.

10. Risk Management

Sacré Cœur is committed to proactively and systematically identifying and assessing risks to student safety across the whole school environment, and reducing or eliminating (where possible) all potential sources of harm. The School documents, implements, monitors and periodically reviews the risk management strategies for child safety and ensures that the strategies change as needed and as new risks arise.

The School enacts this commitment through:

- The Risk and Compliance Framework
- The Risk Appetite Statement
- The Risk Register
- The going review of the school's risk register including controls, actions and monitoring
- Incident management
- Risk assessments
- Review of policies and procedures

The School has formed a Risk Subcommittee that meets quarterly and reports directly to the School Board.

11. Education and Training for School Staff

At Sacré Cœur, all staff are provided 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.

Staff Induction specifically includes:

- Familiarisation with and an acknowledgement of compliance with the School's Child Safety Policy and [Child Protection – Reporting Obligation Policy](#)
- Familiarisation with and a signed commitment to the school's [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#)
- Training about child protection reporting obligations, protocols for receiving/recording complaints
- Training and familiarisation around all the school's policies, codes, practices, and procedures governing child safety and child-connected work
Understanding of supervision arrangements that are in place for all staff who engage in child-connected work

Staff Professional Learning provides opportunities for staff (and where appropriate, volunteers) to:

- Maintain, develop and improve skills and capabilities around child safety, including relevant legislative requirements
- Develop understanding of the risk of harm to children; the different types of harm; and how to identify grooming and abuse
- Understand and build confidence around their reporting obligations

12. Relevant Legislation

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)

Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic.)

Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic.)

Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic.)

Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)

Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.) - Three new criminal offences have been introduced under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.):

- 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 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.

13. Breach of this Policy

Where an **employee** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this Policy, Sacré Cœur may start the process under clause 13 of the *Victorian Catholic Education Multi Enterprise Agreement 2013* (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 **Chair of the Sacré Cœur School Board**. Relevant notification should also be made to Catholic Education Melbourne (Office of Professional Conduct, Ethics and Investigation).

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:

- [Child Protection – Reporting Obligations Policy](#)
- Feedback Policy
- Psychologists Policy
- Feedback Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Staff Whistleblower Policy
- Student Wellbeing Policy
- Parent/Caregiver Code of Conduct
- Student Code of Conduct

and/or contact Catholic Education Melbourne (Office of Professional Conduct, Ethics and Investigation)

14. Review of the Child Safety Policy

Sacré Cœur is committed to continuous improvement of the School's child safety systems and practices. This policy is intended 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. The School will maintain a history of updates to the policy in the Documents Control section of the document (page 9).

15. Related References

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.

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) 2018, Victorian Catholic Education Multi Enterprise Agreement, CECV.

Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, Vatican.

Department of Education, August 2018 edition, PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools

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.

Parliament of Victoria, Family and Community Development Committee, 2013, Betrayal of Trust



Sacré Cœur

Child Safety Policy

Document Control

Document Details

Document Name	Child Safety Policy
Document created by	Director of Risk and Compliance
Document Approval	Leadership Team School Board

Document Management

Relevant to:	All Teaching Staff, General Staff, School Board members, Volunteers, Visitors, Clergy, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers
Related documents include, but not limited to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Safety Code of Conduct (2021) • Child Protection – Reporting Obligation Policy (2021) • Alcohol Policy (2021) • Staff Wellbeing Policy (2019) • Feedback Policy (2019) • Grievance Policy (2019) • Whistleblower Policy (2021) • Parent Code of Conduct (2020) • Student Code of Conduct (2020) • Student Wellbeing Policy (2018) • Privacy Policy (2019) • Psychologist Policy (2020) • OHS Policy (2019) • Against Bullying Policy (2018)
Related Legislation, but not limited to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministerial Order 870 (2016) • The Child and Young Persons Act (2005) • Privacy Act Cth (1988) / Australian Privacy Principles (2014) • Crimes Act 1958 • Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) • Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic) • Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic) • Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic.) • Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005) • Occupational Health and Safety Act (2004) • Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act (1986) • Sex Discrimination Act (1984) • Workplace Relations Act (1996)
Review:	The Policy shall be reviewed on an annual basis by the School Leadership Team and the School Board. The next review of this Policy is due April 2021.

Change History

Author	Date	Change Description	Version
W Ross	May 2017	Original policy created, approved by Leadership, communicated to all staff and published	V1
W Ross / N Visic	Jan 2019	Policy reviewed and updates made	V2
W Ross / N Visic	Feb 2019	Policy reviewed and endorsed by Leadership Team and School Board with changes and communicated to all staff via ELMO Learning.	V2
N Visic	April 2020	Updated Policy reviewed and endorsed by the Leadership Team and School Board. Updated Policy communicated to school community, updated to ELMO Learning and published on website.	V3
N Visic	April/May 2021	Policy reviewed and no changes required. Policy endorsed by the Leadership Team and School Board, communicated to school community, updated to ELMO Learning and published on website.	V3