



## Purpose

To demonstrate the strong commitment of St Mary's College to the care, safety and wellbeing of all students at our school. It provides an outline of the procedures, actions and strategies that will be implemented to ensure that a child safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels of the school, 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.

These procedures take into account relevant legislative requirements within the state of Victoria, including the specific requirements of the Child Safe Standards as set out in [Ministerial Order No. 1359 : Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises](#).

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

### **Child Safety Officers:**

*Mr Wayne Smith, Principal*

*Mrs Genevieve Gordon, Deputy Principal Operations*

*Mrs Allison Moore, Director Wellbeing*

*Mrs Tanya Begley, College Counsellor*

## Scope

Everyone employed or volunteering at our school has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure a child safe culture in which the wellbeing and safety of all students is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make ([CECV Statement of Commitment to Child Safety](#)).

These procedures apply to all school staff, volunteers and contractors whether they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to school council members where indicated.

These procedures apply to all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided by for a student's use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers.

This Procedure should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes including:

1. [PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to Abuse-Reporting Obligations Policy](#), [PROTECT: Procedure Informing Staff of Reporting Obligations](#)
2. [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#)
3. [Reportable Conduct Policy](#)

## Procedures

### **1. Responsibilities of school leadership**

The principal, the school governing authority and school leaders at our school 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 and wellbeing. 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
- creating an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of abuse to relevant authorities.
- ensuring thorough and rigorous practices are applied in the recruitment, screening and ongoing professional learning of staff and volunteers
- ensuring that school personnel have regular and appropriate learning to develop their knowledge of, openness to, and ability to prevent, identify and address child safety and wellbeing matters
- ensuring that the school has in place appropriate risk management strategies and practices that focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks related to child safety and wellbeing in the school environment
- providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm legislative obligations, policy and procedures in relation to children 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. 1359
- ensuring the school takes specific action to protect children from abuse in line with the three 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](#)
- ensuring the school understands and reports all matters that may constitute reportable conduct under the Reportable Conduct Scheme and in accordance with the school's Reportable Conduct Policy
- sharing information under legislated information sharing schemes (CISS and FVISS) in accordance with the school's prescribed role as an Information Sharing Entity (ISE)
- ensuring that the school monitors and reviews the risks related to child safety and wellbeing, including evaluating the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls, on an annual basis.
- Child safety is consistently prioritized at College Executive meetings, with the topic included as a regular agenda item to ensure ongoing attention and oversight.
- Regular Wellbeing Team meetings

## **2. Responsibilities of school staff**

Responsibilities of school staff (school employees, contractors and clergy) and volunteers 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 policies, procedures and 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
- implementing inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students
- 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, including ways to prevent, identify and mitigate risks relating to child safety and wellbeing
- 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

- where risks of child abuse are identified, ensuring that action is taken to mitigate those risks and that risks and actions are appropriately recorded.
- Child safety is consistently prioritised at College Executive meetings, with the topic included as a regular agenda item to ensure ongoing attention and oversight.

### **3. Organisational arrangements**

The principal has the overall leadership role in monitoring and responding to the policy, procedures and practices for child safety and wellbeing in our school in accordance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

We have appointed a Child Safety and Director of Wellbeing, Allison Moore, Director Wellbeing, and the role description is available in the staff handbook:

- The Child Safety and Wellbeing Team assists the principal.
- The Child Safety and Wellbeing Team works in preventing, identifying and mitigating risks in child safety and wellbeing.
- The Child Safety and Wellbeing Team also supports the principal to monitor implementation of College policies, procedures and practices, to monitor and review the risks associated with child safety and wellbeing (including by and to identify professional learning).

Our College's website and newsletter will provide information to keep parents and carers informed of child safety and wellbeing commitments, procedures and arrangements.

### **4. Expectation of our school staff and volunteers – Child Safety Code of Conduct**

At our College, we expect College employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy to proactively ensure the safety and wellbeing of students, to identify concerns about child safety and wellbeing and to take appropriate action if there are concerns about the safety and wellbeing 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 comply with all requirements. We have 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 to safeguard them against abuse and/or neglect.

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

### **5. Student safety and participation and empowerment**

At our 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 including expressing their identity. This may include expressions of culture, sexuality and gender.

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

The curriculum design integrates appropriate knowledge and skills to enhance students' understanding of being safe, as well as their understanding of their rights to safety, information and participation. Teaching and learning strategies that acknowledge and support student agency and voice are implemented. We ensure that students are offered access to sexual abuse prevention programs and to relevant related information in an age-appropriate way.

We have developed appropriate education about:

- standards of behaviour for students attending our College
- healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality)
- resilience
- child abuse awareness and prevention.

We have also developed curriculum planning documents that detail the strategies and actions the school takes to implement its obligations to ensure that:

- children and students are informed about all of their rights, including to safety, information and participation
- the importance of friendship is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, to help children and students feel safe and be less isolated
- staff and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children and students to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns
- we have strategies in place to develop a culture that facilitates participation and is responsive to the input of children and students
- we provide opportunities for children and students to participate and is responsive to their contributions to strengthen confidence and engagement
- Our curriculum is designed to meet the diverse learning needs and abilities of all students. Differentiation is embedded through:
  - Tiered learning tasks and assessment rubrics catering to varying readiness levels.
  - Flexible grouping, targeted support and extension programs.
  - Use of Individual Education Plans (IEPs), Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs) and Student Support Group (SSG) meetings.
  - Access to Learning Diversity staff who collaborate with teachers to adjust content, process, product and environment for optimal student learning.
- We provide student-friendly materials in multiple formats across our school to ensure all students are informed of their rights and support options:
  - Wellbeing posters in visible areas outline how students can raise concerns or complaints, support a friend, and access key staff.
  - Contact details for our College Wellbeing Team (including our Wellbeing Leader, School Counsellor and Learning Diversity Leader) are published in student diaries, on the school's Learning Management System (SIMON)
  - Helplines such as Kids Helpline and eSafety Commissioner contacts are included in student diaries and on posters in student common areas.
- Students are introduced to our Child Safety Code of Conduct through age-appropriate classroom discussions led by House Mentor, classroom teachers and the Wellbeing Team.
- A child-friendly version of the Code of Conduct is available in student common the college website and on SIMON, outlining what respectful and safe behaviour from adults looks like.
- Explicit teaching of protective behaviours as part of Health and Wellbeing and Respectful Relationships programs.
- A Buddy Program that links Year 6 students with Foundation students to promote belonging and mentoring.
- Peer mentoring and friendship-building programs in the early years and in transition points such as Year 7 entry.
- Lunchtime clubs/sports that offer inclusive spaces for all students to connect, particularly those who may experience social difficulties.
- Sports and Art Club are run through the College counsellor
- Integration of the Respectful Relationships curriculum, empowering students to understand rights, respect and relationships.
- Specific lessons focused on digital safety, emotional literacy, and protective strategies throughout Pastoral Care Lessons and Curriculum areas
- Daily check ins through LifeSkills Go - Primary
- A Student Representative Council (SRC) that meets regularly with school leaders to raise student ideas and co-lead initiatives.
- Opportunities for students to be involved in policy reviews, such as contributing to student-friendly versions of school rules and codes.

- School Tour and Interview with Principle or member of the Wellbeing team, introduction to House Mentor Teacher
- Follow-up check-ins with the Wellbeing Team to ensure the transition is smooth.

We support students to identify, discuss and report their concerns.

We listen to children, take their views seriously, and are committed to addressing any concerns that they raise with us.

Students impacted by a child abuse or child safety matter will be provided with support to assist them to feel safe at school and develop protective factors. Supports will be tailored to each individual student and circumstance. Supports provided to students at our school may include:

- Regularly communicating with the student or students and their parents/ guardians/ carers where appropriate
- Convening a Student Support Group of school wellbeing staff and teachers to plan, support and monitor affected students
- Developing Student Support Plans for students impacted by the incident to ensure appropriate levels of care and support are provided
- Access to counselling
- Referrals to external services such as family violence services, Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA), or Headspace
- Include further relevant details of school practices or supports that may be offered

## 6. Reporting and responding

Our College creates records relevant to any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and maintains and disposes of those records in accordance with security and privacy requirements and [Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards](#) (including minimum retention periods). 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.), the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (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 [PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to Abuse 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.

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 under the reportable conduct scheme as well as mandatory reporting
- 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 child abuse and grooming under criminal law
- understand and comply with information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
- comply with reporting obligations under the reportable conduct scheme including obligations to report and investigate allegations of reportable conduct.

Our College has also established additional internal procedures and processes to help ensure that appropriate action is taken to prevent, identify and respond to concerns about the wellbeing and/or safety of a student.

Our College is a prescribed Information Sharing Entity (ISE) meaning that, where legislated requirements are met, it can share confidential information with other ISEs to promote child wellbeing or safety under the CISS or FVISS.

At our College, if any member of our College community has concerns for a child's safety they need to discuss, they can notify the school Principal, the Deputy Principal or Allison Moore Director of Wellbeing.

If the Principal or Child Safety and Wellbeing Officer is not available, then it should be discussed with a member of the school leadership team. Alternatively, any member of the College community may report directly to the responsible authority.

The staff member, supported by the Principal or designated Child Safety and Wellbeing Officer will follow the step-by-step guide to making a report as outlined in the [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#).

## **7. Screening and recruitment of school staff**

Our College leadership team members 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 wellbeing 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 school's Child Safety Code of Conduct and the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

Each job description for staff involved in child-connected work has a clear statement that sets out the requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety and wellbeing for those in that role and the occupant's essential qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety and wellbeing.

When recruiting and selecting employees, contractors and volunteers involved in child-connected work, we ensure that we gather, verify and record the following information about any person we propose to engage:

- proof of personal identity
- confirmation that the person has a current Working with Children clearance
- review of the results of a recent National Police Check
- evidence of current professional registration (as relevant)
- evidence of any essential or relevant professional or other qualifications
- the applicant's history of work involving children
- references that address the applicant's suitability for the job and working with children. We will also ensure that appropriate supervision or support arrangements are in place in relation to the induction of new school staff into the College's policies, codes, practices and procedures governing child safety and wellbeing and child-connected work.

We have procedures and processes for monitoring and assessing the continuing suitability of school staff and volunteers 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.

The principal and principal's delegates of our College ensures the implementation of the following CECV guidelines:

- [Guidelines on the Employment of Staff in Catholic Schools](#)
- [Guidelines on the Engagement of Volunteers in Catholic Schools](#)
- [Guidelines on the Engagement of Contractors in Catholic Schools](#)
- [NDIS/External Providers: Guidelines for Schools](#).

## **8. Child safety and wellbeing – education and training for school staff**

Our College's leadership team members provide employees, volunteers and clergy with regular and appropriate opportunities to develop their knowledge of, openness to, and ability to address child

safety and wellbeing 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.

At least annually, our professional learning and training addresses:

- staff's individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse
- preventing, identifying and mitigating child abuse risks in the school environment without compromising a child or student's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities
- the reportable conduct scheme
- our College's current child safety standards (including this Policy, the Child Safety Code of Conduct and any other policies and procedures relating to child safety and wellbeing, including in relation to managing complaints and concerns related to child abuse)
- guidance on recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
- guidance on responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm, including their mandatory reporting obligations.
- guidance on how to build culturally safe environments for children and students
- guidance on their information sharing and recordkeeping obligations, including under the [Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards](#) and our [Child Safety and Wellbeing Record Keeping Policy](#)

## **9. Diversity and equity – strategies and actions**

At our school, we are committed to ensuring that equity is upheld, and that diverse needs are respected in policy and practice. We aim to ensure that:

- all school staff and volunteers understand the diverse circumstances of children and students
- our school provides support and responds to vulnerable children and students
- children, students, staff, volunteers and the school community have access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand
- the school pays particular attention to the needs of students with disability, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students who are unable to live at home, international students, and LGBTIQ+ students
- the school pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal students and provides and promotes a culturally safe environment for them.

We do not tolerate discrimination, racism or bullying.

At St Mary's College Seymour, we are deeply committed to promoting a culture of inclusion, respect and dignity. We have a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of discrimination, racism and bullying, and this commitment is embedded in our daily practices, curriculum, and community engagement.

Strategies and Actions:

Whole-school Policies:

- Our Bullying Prevention Policy, Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, and Equal Opportunity Policy clearly state that discrimination, racism and bullying are not acceptable in any form.
- These policies are reviewed regularly and made accessible to students, staff and families via our website, SIMON, and enrolment materials.

Curriculum and Learning:

- Respect for diversity and inclusion is explicitly taught through the Respectful Relationships curriculum and integrated across subject areas such as Pastoral Care and Health.



- Lessons include a focus on recognising prejudice, challenging stereotypes, understanding the impact of racism, and celebrating cultural and individual diversity.

#### Events and Awareness Campaigns:

- Participation in National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence and Reconciliation Week.
- Regular school assemblies and liturgies reinforce the values of justice, compassion and respect for all people.

#### Professional Learning for Staff:

- Ongoing professional development for staff includes training in inclusive education, and restorative practices.
- Staff are trained in how to identify and respond to incidents of bullying, racism and discrimination using restorative and trauma-informed approaches.

#### Student and Parent Communication:

- Expectations are clearly communicated to students during orientation, assemblies, classroom briefings and through visual reminders around the school.

Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne – [Welcoming Each Other: Guidelines for Interfaith Education in the Schools of the Archdiocese of Melbourne](#)

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) – [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan](#)

CECV – [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives](#)

CECV – [Assessing and Intervening with Impact](#)

CECV – [Guidelines for Supporting New Arrivals and Refugees](#)

CECV – [Intervention Framework](#)

CECV – [Parent Guide to Program Support Groups](#)

CECV – [Personal Care Support in Schools](#)

CECV – [Positive Behaviour Guidelines](#)

Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM) – [Horizons of Hope – Vision, Context, Strategy, Practice](#)

CEM – [Identity and Growth: A perspective for Catholic schools](#)

Catholic Education South Australia – [Children: Close to the Mystery of God](#)

Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA) – [Live Life to the Full: EREA Safe & Inclusive Learning Communities Statement](#)

MACS – [Allways: A guide to supporting all learners in all ways always](#)

MACS – [Religious Education Curriculum](#)

National Catholic Education Commission – [Framework for Student Faith Formation in Catholic Schools](#)

[Victorian Curriculum F–10](#)

Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET) [Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment](#)

Victorian DET – [Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships](#), incorporating a Catholic context

## 10. Family engagement – strategies and actions

Our school staff ensure that families, carers and other members of the school community are informed about relevant child safety and wellbeing matters and are involved in the promotion of child safety and wellbeing at the school. We aim to ensure that:

- families participate in decisions relating to child safety and wellbeing which affect their child
- we engage and openly communicate with families, carers and other members of the school community about our child safe approach



- all members of the school community have access to information relating to child safety and wellbeing
- families, carers and other members of the school community have the opportunity to provide input into the development and review of the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and practices
- families, carers and other members of the school community are informed about the operations and governance of the school in relation to child safety and wellbeing.

At St Mary's College Seymour, we recognise families as integral partners in the safety, wellbeing, and learning of our students. We are committed to building respectful, open and collaborative relationships with families and carers, and ensuring they are informed, empowered, and actively involved in supporting the school's culture of safety and inclusion.

Provide families with accessible, easy-to-understand versions of key policies, including the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, Code of Conduct, Bullying Prevention Policy, and Complaints Handling Policy via:

- The school website
- The SIMON parent portal
- Newsletters and parent information evenings

Ensure communications are culturally safe, language-appropriate and accessible for all families, including those from diverse cultural, religious or linguistic backgrounds, or families of students with disability.

Regularly update families on wellbeing programs, protective behaviours curriculum, and inclusion initiatives through:

- Marian Newsletter
- Information sessions on topics such as online safety, respectful relationships, and mental health support

## **11. Risk management**

At our school, we are 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 annually review our risks and risk management strategies for child safety and wellbeing, evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of our risk controls and ensure that the strategies change as needed and as new risks arise.

At St Mary's College, Seymour, we are unwavering in our commitment to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of every child in our care. In line with Ministerial Order No. 1359 and the National Child Safe Standards, we will establish a clear and structured approach to prevent, identify and manage risks related to child safety and wellbeing across all school environments and activities.

To lead this effort, St Mary's College will establish a Child Safety and Wellbeing Team, which will include members of the school leadership team, wellbeing staff, teaching staff, and where appropriate, representation from parents and community stakeholders. This team will be responsible for:

- Conducting regular risk assessments across all areas of the school environment, including physical spaces, digital platforms, and offsite activities such as camps and excursions.
- Identifying specific risks associated with activities delivered by external contractors, volunteers, and third-party providers, ensuring these individuals and organisations are appropriately screened, inducted, and supervised.
- Implementing clear strategies and protocols to mitigate identified risks, including staff training, student education programs, and appropriate reporting.

- Regularly reviewing and updating our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and related procedures, including responding to any incidents or complaints, changes in the school context, or updated legal or regulatory guidance.

Strategies St Mary's College uses to regularly and routinely monitor the online environment:

- The school employs centrally managed web filtering and cybersecurity tools (e.g., via MACS ICT infrastructure) to restrict access to inappropriate, harmful, or unsafe online content on all school-managed devices and networks.
- These systems enable real-time monitoring and alerts, allowing the ICT team and school leaders to respond promptly to concerning online behaviour or access attempts.
- Staff are trained to actively supervise student use of technology during class time and to enforce responsible digital behaviour aligned with our Acceptable Use Agreements.
- Students are regularly reminded of their responsibilities when using school devices and platforms, both at school and at home.
- All students and parents/carers must agree to and sign a Digital Technology and Acceptable Use Agreement annually.
- The College delivers explicit digital citizenship education across year levels, covering safe online behaviour, respectful communication, cyberbullying prevention, digital footprint awareness, and strategies for help-seeking.
- eSafety Commission online incursions
- Communication and collaboration between staff and students is conducted through school-managed platforms (e.g. Google Classroom, SIMON, PAM)
- Non-approved apps and platforms are restricted or blocked from use on school devices.
- The College has clear processes for students, staff, and parents to report online safety concerns, including bullying, harassment, or exposure to harmful content.
- Incidents are recorded, investigated, and responded to by the relevant wellbeing and leadership staff, with appropriate supports and follow-up provided.

Strategies St Mary's College uses to consider the risks posed to children and young people arising from third party providers engaged by the school:

- Verification of Working with Children Clearances (WWCC) or VIT registration for all individuals who engage with students or work in student-accessible areas.
- Collection of risk assessments and child safety policies from external providers, particularly for regular service providers or offsite activities (e.g., camp operators).
- Members of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Team review arrangements with external providers annually or when services change.
- All visitors must report to reception upon arrival, where they sign in using our electronic visitor management system.
- Any incidents, complaints, or concerns involving third parties are documented and reviewed in accordance with our Child Safety Incident Reporting and Response procedures.
- Visitors are required to present a valid WWCC card if their visit involves working with or near students, and this is checked and recorded.

- All visitors are issued with a clearly identifiable visitor badge, which must be worn at all times while on campus.
- Visitors are only permitted to access designated areas and must be accompanied by or under the supervision of a staff member when near student areas, unless otherwise authorised.
- Any incidents, complaints, or concerns involving third parties are documented and reviewed in accordance with our Child Safety Incident Reporting and Response procedures.

## Definitions

### Child

Means a child or young person who is under the age of 18 years.

### Child abuse

Child abuse includes:

- any act committed against a Child involving:
  - a sexual offence
  - an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
- the infliction, on a Child, of:
  - physical violence
  - serious emotional or psychological harm
- serious neglect of a Child.

### Child safety

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 suspicions, incidents, disclosures or allegations of child abuse (Ministerial Order No. 1359).

### Child neglect

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

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

Child sexual abuse is where 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

Grooming refers to predatory conduct engaged in by a person 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](#)).

### 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, registered teachers and early childhood teachers, school counsellors, religious clergy, 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](#)).

### **Reasonable belief – mandatory reporting**

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](#)).

### **Reasonable belief – reportable conduct scheme**

When a person has a reasonable belief that a worker/volunteer has committed reportable conduct or misconduct that may involve reportable conduct. A reasonable belief is more than suspicion and there must be some objective basis for the belief. It does not necessitate proof or require certainty.

NOTE: the difference between the reasonable belief definitions under mandatory reporting and the reportable conduct scheme is the category of persons who are required to, or can, form the reasonable belief which forms the basis for a report.

### **Reportable conduct**

Reportable conduct for the purposes of the Reportable Conduct Scheme is:

- a sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child, whether or not a criminal proceeding in relation to the offence has been commenced or concluded
- sexual misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence of, a child
- physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- significant neglect of a child as defined in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic).
- significant neglect.

### **School environment**

Means any of the following physical, online or virtual places used during or outside school/service hours:

- a campus of the school
- a campus of a MACSEYE service
- online or virtual school/service environments made available or authorised by MACS or a MACS school or MACSEYE service for use by a child or student (including email, intranet systems, software, applications, collaboration tools and online services)
- other locations provided by the school/service or through a third-party provider for a child or student to use including, but not limited to, locations used for camps, approved homestay accommodation, delivery of education and training, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events) ([Ministerial Order No. 1359](#)).

### **School staff**

Means an individual working in a school environment who is:

- directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
- a contracted service provider engaged by MACS (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary) engaged to perform child-related work for our school
- a minister of religion, a religious leader or an employee or officer of a religious body associated with MACS ([Ministerial Order No. 1359](#)).

### **Volunteer**

A person who performs work without remuneration or reward for MACS, a MACS school or MACSEYE service in the school/service environment.

## Related policies and documents

### Related MACS policies and documents

[Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy](#)

[Child Safety Code of Conduct](#)

[Engaging Families in Child Safety Policy](#)

[PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to Abuse Reporting Obligations Policy](#)

[Recruitment Policy](#)

[Reportable Conduct Policy](#)

### Resources (external to MACS)

[CECV Guidelines on the Employment of Staff in Catholic Schools](#)

[CECV Guidelines on the Engagement of Volunteers in Catholic Schools](#)

[CECV Guidelines on the Engagement of Contractors in Catholic Schools](#)

[CECV NDIS/External Providers: Guidelines for Schools](#)

[CECV Positive Behaviour Guidelines](#)

## Legislation and standards

Ministerial Order 1359: Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises

*Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.)

*Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic.)

*Worker Screening Act 2020* (Vic.)

*Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic.)

Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic.)

*Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic.)

*Privacy Act 1988* (Cth)

*Public Records Act 1973* (Vic)

*Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.) – including three criminal offences under this Act:

- [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.
- [Failure to protect offence](#): This 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
- [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.

## Policy information table

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Preliminary Review by	
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