



<b>Policy Number:</b>	COLLEGE 31
<b>Policy Name:</b>	Child Safe Policy
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Deputy Principal - Students
<b>Date Approved by Leadership:</b>	November 3, 2021
<b>Date of Next Review:</b>	November 2024
<b>Related Policies:</b>	Mandatory Reporting Policy Pastoral Care Policy Student Device Acceptable Use Policy Student Social Media Policy Complaints & Concerns Policy Safeguarding Children & Young People – Code of Conduct

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## PREAMBLE

God is at the centre of our College...Mercy is the heartbeat of the Gospel. We encourage every student to grow in the fullness of life and realise their potential through the bread we break at school, the bread of relationships and the bread of conversation. Let us engage the heart and bring faith to life and life to faith (Thomas Groome).

## LEGISLATION

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. 1359*. This policy applies to St Joseph's College staff, including employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy.

Further information relating to the Ministerial Order can be found at <https://www.safeguardingservices.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Ministerial-Order-1359.pdf>

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 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*).

1.2 The person of each individual human being, in his or her material spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ's teaching: that is why the promotion of the human persons is the goal of the Catholic school (*Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, n. 9*).

## 2. PURPOSE

2.1 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 the 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 St Joseph's College.

2.2 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 St Joseph's College staff, including employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy.

### 3. PRINCIPLES

3.1 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*).

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

- All students deserve, as a fundamental right, safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect.
- St Joseph's 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.
- 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 at St Joseph's 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.
- 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, children and young people.
- 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.
- Staff, clergy, volunteers, contractors, parents and students should feel free to raise concerns about child safety, knowing these will be taken seriously by St Joseph's College 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.

### 4. DEFINITIONS USED IN THIS POLICY

4.1 **Child:** A child or a young person enrolled as a student at St Joseph's College.

4.2 **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 (*Ministerial Order No. 870*).

4.3 **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*).

4.4 **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\*](#)

4.5 **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](#)

4.6 **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. [\(PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools\)](#)

4.7 **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. [\(PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools\)](#)

4.8 **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. [\(PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools\)](#)

4.9 **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 campus of St Joseph's College;
- Online school environments (including platforms used for remote learning, email and intranet systems);
- Other locations provided by St Joseph's College for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events). *(Ministerial Order No. 870)*

4.10 **School/College Staff** means an individual working in a school environment who is:

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

4.11 **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. [\(PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools\)](#)

## 5. POLICY COMMITMENT

5.1 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.

5.2 Our commitment to our students:

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

#### 5.3 Our commitment to parents/carers:

- We commit to communicating honestly and openly with parents/carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children.
- We commit to engaging with, and listening to, the views of parents/carers about our child safety practice, policies and procedures.
- We commit to transparency in our decision making with parents/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.

#### 5.4 Our commitment to St Joseph's College staff (employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy):

- 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 Safe 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 college employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.

## 6. RESPONSIBILITIES AND ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

6.1 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*).

6.2 St Joseph's College has allocated roles and responsibilities for child safety as follows:

#### 6.2.1 Guide to Responsibilities of St Joseph's College Leadership:

The Principal, the school governing authority and school 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:

- 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 college meets the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in *Ministerial Order No. 870*;
- 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](#).

#### 6.2.2 Guide to Responsibilities of St Joseph’s College Staff:

Responsibilities of St Joseph’s College staff (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 St Joseph’s College Child Safety Code of Conduct;
- Wearing the official St Joseph’s College lanyard with photo ID at all times when on the college premises to ensure that official staff only are interacting with students. Official visitors’ lanyards/printed visitor labels are to be used by visiting adults.
- Ensuring the online environment is used in accordance with the organisation’s Code of Conduct and any other child safety or wellbeing policy and practice.

#### 6.2.3 Organisational Arrangements

St Joseph’s College enacts this commitment to child safety through:

- Appointment of a Child Protection Officer (Deputy Principal, Students);
- A budget allocation to enable regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to child safety and the wellbeing of children and young people;
- Participation in the Diocesan child protection network;
- Use of the St Joseph’s College website and newsletter to remind and to keep parents/carers informed of child safety commitments, procedures and arrangements.

## **7. EXPECTATION OF OUR STAFF – CHILD SAFE CODE OF CONDUCT**

7.1 At St Joseph’s College, we expect our 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 St Joseph’s 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.

7.2 We have developed a Child Safety Code of Conduct, which complements the Mercy Code of Conduct agreed to by all staff, which recognises the critical role that St Joseph’s 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.

7.3 Our Code also protects St Joseph’s College staff through clarification of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

## **8. STUDENT SAFETY PARTICIPATION**

8.1 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.

8.2 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/carers raise with us.

8.3 Students are encouraged to have input into the Child Safe process through:

- The Student Representative Council;
- Reporting to trusted staff, including the Wellbeing team.

## **9. REPORTING AND RESPONDING**

9.1 St Joseph's 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*.

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

9.3 St Joseph's College Child Safe Policy 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.

9.4 This 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 '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.

### **9.5 Local Arrangements for Reporting Concerns**

9.5.1 St Joseph's College has established internal processes to ensure that appropriate action is taken to respond to concerns about the wellbeing and/or safety of a student. The St Joseph's College Child Protection Officer plays an essential role in ensuring that our college is a Child Safe School.

9.5.2 Staff and volunteers with concerns about the wellbeing and/or safety of a student can seek advice from the Child Protection Officer and/or the Principal, who can assist you to make a report. If your concern is about the Principal's conduct, you can speak to the School Governing Authority or to the Catholic Education Office Ballarat - Child Protection Officer.

9.5.3 Parents/Carers with concerns about the wellbeing and/or safety of a student, can speak to the Child Protection Officer or the Principal, who can assist you to decide if it is necessary to make a report. If your concern is about the Principal's conduct, you can speak to the School Governing Authority or to the Catholic Education Office Ballarat - Child Protection Officer.

9.6 Our complaints and disclosure processes are outlined and detailed in the St Joseph's College Complaints and Concerns Policy.

9.7 St Joseph's College Pastoral Care Policy outlines procedures for creating an environment where students feel safe disclosing child safe concerns.

## **10. SCREENING AND RECRUITMENT OF ST JOSEPH'S COLLEGE STAFF**

10.1 St Joseph's College will apply thorough and rigorous screening processes in the recruitment of employees and volunteers. Our commitment to child safety and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements for such employee, contractor and volunteer positions. All applicants are provided with copies of the college Child Safety Code of Conduct and this Child Safe Policy.

10.2 When recruiting and selecting employees, contractors and volunteers the college follows the CECV Guidelines on the Employment of Staff in Catholic Schools, which includes a checklist aligned with the Child Safe Standards. This resource is available at: <http://www.cecv.catholic.edu.au/Industrial-Relations/Policies-and-Guidelines/Child-Safety>.

10.3 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 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.

10.4 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.

## **11. CHILD SAFETY – EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR COLLEGE STAFF**

11.1 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.

11.2 Staff induction specifically includes:

- Familiarisation with this Child Safe Policy and its many implications;
- Familiarisation with and a signed commitment to St Joseph's College Child Safety Code of Conduct;
- Training about child protection reporting obligations, protocols for receiving/recording complaints;
- Training and familiarisation around all the St Joseph's College 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.

11.3 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;
- Complete the annual online mandatory reporting module.

## 12. RISK MANAGEMENT

12.1 At St Joseph's College 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. Risk management plans consider risks posed by organisational settings, activities, and the physical environment. 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.

12.2 Staff and volunteers identify and mitigate risks in the online and physical environments without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.

12.3 We will enact this commitment through:

- Child safety as a standing item on staff meeting agenda;
- Periodic review of the Child Safety Risk Register;
- Completing a risk assessment of all new activities.

## 13. 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 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: 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.
  - 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.

## 14. RELATED POLICIES

### 14.1 Diocese of Ballarat Schools Catholic Education Limited Related Policies

- DOBCEL PROTECT: Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy 2021
- DOBCEL Child Safe Governance Policy 2021
- DOBCEL Child Safe School Policy 2021
- DOBCEL Pastoral Care and Wellbeing Policy 2021
- DOBCEL VIT and WWCC Procedures 2020
- CEOB Police and Department of Health and Human Services Interview Protocols March 2017
- [CECV Whole School Approaches to Supporting Positive Behaviour](#)

### 14.2 Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Related Policies (endorsed by DOBCEL)

- <https://www.macs.vic.edu.au/About-Us/Policies/Police-and-DHHS-Interview-Protocols.aspx>
- <https://www.macs.vic.edu.au/About-Us/Policies/Child-Protection-Reporting-Obligations.aspx>

### 14.3 St Joseph's College Policies

- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Student Device Acceptable Use Policy
- Student Social Media Policy
- Complaints and Concerns Policy

## 15. BREACH OF POLICY

15.1 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 2013 (VCEMEA) for managing employment concerns. This may result in disciplinary consequences.

15.2 Where the Principal is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the concerned party is advised to contact the school governing authority. Relevant notification should also be made to the Director of Catholic Education, Diocese of Ballarat.

15.3 Where any member of the college community is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, St Joseph's College is to take appropriate action, including in accordance with our Mandatory Reporting Policy, Complaints & Concerns Policy and/or contact the Diocesan Professional Standards Coordinator or relevant Educational Consultant.

## 16. REVIEW OF THIS CHILD SAFETY POLICY

16.1 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.

16.2 We will maintain a history of updates to the policy. Refer bottom of page.

## 16. 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) 2013, [Victorian Catholic Education Multi Enterprise Agreement 2013](#), CECV.
- Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, [The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium](#), Vatican.
- Department of Education, 2016, [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](#)