St Patrick’s Primary School
Child Safety Standards
Policy
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Child Safety Standards – Overview

Introduction
St Patrick’s Primary School is committed to providing a safe environment for all students and young people and will take active steps to protect them against abuse. To achieve this the school has developed and actively enforces Child Safety Strategies to ensure that any person involved in ‘child connected work’ is aware of their obligations & responsibilities for ensuring the safety of all children under their care.

In accordance with requirements of the Victorian Government’s Ministerial Order No 870, St Patrick’s Primary School maintains a culture of ‘no tolerance’ to child abuse. To achieve this it has established a holistic Child Safety Strategy incorporating the processes, policies & procedures listed below.

St Patrick’s Primary School Child safety Strategy includes, but is not limited to the:

1. Establishment of strategies for embedding a culture of child safety at the school;
2. Maintenance & communication of a policy affirming the school’s commitment to child safety and the promotion of an environment where children feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential;
4. Established processes for screening, supervision, training, and other human resource practices to reduce the risk of child abuse & promote a child safe learning environment;
6. Risk Management strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
7. Maintenance of strategies to promote student participation & empowerment in creating an environment where they feel respected, valued and are capable of reaching their full potential.

Scope
St Patrick’s Primary School Child Safety Standards apply to any individual employed by the school, employed under contract, volunteers or contracted service providers. Failure to comply with any aspect of the school’s Child Safety Standards may result in criminal proceedings in accordance with the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.), the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.) and the recommendations of the Betrayal of Trust Report 2013.
Definitions

Child: Any child or young person enrolled as a student at the school.

Child Connected Work: Work authorised by the school’s Principal, members of the Leadership Team or Board performed by an adult in the school environment while children are present or are reasonably expected to be present.

Child Abuse: Includes:
  a. Any Act committed against a child involving:
     i. A sexual offence
     ii. An offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
  b. The infliction, on a child of:
     i. Physical violence
     ii. Serious emotional or psychological harm
  c. Serious Neglect of a child.

Child Neglect: The failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child, where they are in a position to do so, with conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and wellbeing.

Child Physical Abuse: Generally, child physical abuse refers to the non-accidental use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Physically abusive behaviours include shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning. The fabrication or induction of an illness by a parent or carer (previously known as Munchausen syndrome by proxy) is also considered physically abusive behaviour.

Child Protection: Statutory services designed to protect children who are at risk of serious harm.

Child Sexual Abuse: Any sexual activity between a child under the age of consent (16) and an adult or older person (i.e. a person five or more years older than the victim) is child sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse can also be:
  » Any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult in a position of power or authority over them (e.g. a teacher); the age of consent laws do not apply in such instances due to the strong imbalance of power that exists between young people and authority figures, as well as the breaching of both personal and public trust that occurs when professional boundaries are violated.
  » Any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult family member, regardless of issues of consent, equality or coercion.
  » Sexual activity between peers that is non-consensual or involves the use of power or coercion.
  » Non-consensual sexual activity between minors (e.g. a 14-year-old and an 11-year-old), or any sexual behaviour between a child and another child or adolescent who, due to their age or stage of development, is in a position of power, trust or responsibility over the
victim. Sexual activity between adolescents at a similar developmental level is not considered abuse.

**Child Safety:** Encompasses matters relating to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

**Mandatory Reporting:** The legal requirement to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect is known as mandatory reporting. Mandated persons include teachers, nurses, police, psychologists, psychiatrists and medical practitioners.

**Reasonable Belief:** When a staff member is 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.

**School Environment:** Any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school for use by a child during or outside of school hours including:

a. A campus of the school
b. Online school environments, including email & intranet systems
c. Other locations provided by the school for a child’s use including school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, school community and other events.

**School Staff:** Any individual working in the school environment who is:

a. Directly engaged or employed by the school Principal or Board
b. A volunteer or contracted service provider
c. A minister of religion.
Our School’s Commitment to Ensuring Child Safety
All students enrolled at St Patrick’s Primary School have the right to feel safe. The wellbeing of students will always be our school’s first priority. The school aims to create a child safe environment where children feel valued & respected by committing to the following arrangements for students, parents, carers, staff members, clergy, volunteers and contractors.

Our Commitment to our Students
» We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all students & young people enrolled in our school.
» We commit to providing students & young people with positive and nurturing experiences.
» We commit to listening to students & 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 students & young people are protected from abuse or harm.
» We commit to teaching students & 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 & young people regarding the creation of a safe school environment.

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

Our Commitment to our School Employees, Clergy, CRTs, Volunteers & Contractors
1. We commit to providing all staff members, clergy, casual relief teachers (CRTs), volunteers & contractors with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles. This will include regular and appropriate learning opportunities.
2. We commit to providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm policy and procedures in relation to child safety and the protection of students and young people. This will
include regular briefings & annual training in the principles and intent of the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct, and staff responsibilities to report concerns.

3. **We commit to listening to all concerns voiced by staff members, students, caregiver’s clergy, volunteers, and contractors about keeping children and young people safe from harm.**

4. **We commit to providing adequate resources to support staff members, clergy, CRTs, volunteers & contractors meet and exceed their Child Safety obligations.**

5. **We commit to appointing a ‘Child Safety Officer’, to further promote child safety and support all members of the school community to understand, meet and exceed their Child Safety obligations.**

6. **We commit to providing support to any member of the school community who reports a child safety complaint, suspected abuse, disclosure or breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct.**

7. **We commit to providing opportunities for staff members, clergy, CRTs, volunteers & contractors to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.**
Standard One – Organisational Culture of Child Safety

St Patrick’s Primary School maintains a ‘culture of child safety’ through effective leadership arrangements. Protecting children from abuse is everybody’s responsibility, and St Patrick’s Primary School Leadership Team takes the main role in embedding a child safety culture across all aspects of the School Community.

All members of staff, clergy, casual relief teachers (CRTs), volunteers & contractors have a responsibility to act to protect students & young people from abuse and to build an environment where children feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. The school maintains a ‘culture of child safety’ through proactive leadership which demonstrates, and insists of others, appropriate values, attitudes and behaviours to ensure the safety of all who attend the school. St Patrick’s Primary School fosters a culture of openness, inclusiveness and awareness, where children and adults know how to respond if they suspect or are subject to abuse or inappropriate behaviour.

All staff members, clergy, CRTs, volunteers & contract service providers must also acknowledge the importance of cultural safety for Indigenous children and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including that of children with a disability.

St Patrick’s Primary School maintains a ‘culture of child safety’ by actively implementing the strategies listed below in accordance with its moral & legal obligations and Victorian Government Ministerial Order 870.

Leadership Responsibilities
All members of the School’s Leadership Team take their responsibility to protect students very seriously. Members of the School’s Leadership Team take the lead in promoting an environment where students and young people feel safe, respected, valued and are capable and confident of reaching their full potential.

St Patrick’s Primary School’s Leadership Team is responsible for embedding a culture of child safety and does so by ensuring the following:

1. Identifying and assessing potential risk of abuse to students and young people via established risk management strategies.
2. Creating an environment for students and young people to be safe and to feel safe.
3. Upholding high principles and standards for all staff members, clergy, CRTs, volunteers, and contractors.
4. Promoting models of behaviour between adults, students and young people based on mutual respect and consideration.
5. Developing & communicating child safe policies & procedures outlining the School’s commitment to promoting children’s wellbeing and protecting children from abuse.

6. Developing & communicating codes of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct and care required when working and interacting with children.

7. Appointing a ‘Child Safety Officer’ to promote child safety and support all members of the school community to understand, meet and exceed their Child Safety obligations.

8. Ensuring thorough and rigorous practices are applied in the recruitment & screening of all staff, clergy, CRTs, volunteers & contractors.

9. Ensuring that staff & other members of the school community have regular and appropriate learning to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters.

10. Promoting inclusion of all children & families from diverse cultural backgrounds and those with disabilities.

11. Empowering and promoting the participation of children in decision-making by providing opportunities for children to express their views on child safety and then incorporate this feedback to improve your policies and practices.

12. Immediately respond to any child safety complaint, disclosure, breach of the Child Safety Code of Conduct or suspected abuse in accordance with its reporting requirements.

13. Providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm legislative obligations, policies and procedures in relation to child and young people’s protection and wellbeing.

14. Ensuring the school meets the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in Ministerial Order No. 870.

**Responsibilities of Staff Members Clergy, CRTs, Volunteers & Contractors:**

Staff members, clergy, CRTs, volunteers & contractors engaged by St Patrick’s Primary School have an obligation to foster a culture of safety for all students and young people by:

1. Treating students and young people with dignity and respect, acting with propriety, providing a duty of care, and protecting children and young people in their care.

2. Understanding and complying with legislative requirements and internal school processes in the course of their work.

3. Demonstrating a commitment to displaying appropriate behaviours in accordance with the school’s Child Safety Code of Conduct.

4. Providing a physically and psychologically safe environment where the wellbeing of children and young people is nurtured.

5. Undertaking regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to child safety and the wellbeing of students and young people.
6. Immediately report any child safety complaint, disclosure, breach of the Child Safety Code of Conduct or suspected abuse to the school’s Child Safety Officer or a member of the school Leadership Team.

7. Assist the Leadership Team in empowering and promoting the participation of children in decision-making by providing opportunities for children to express their views on child safety.

8. 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.


Maintaining & Communicating the School’s Commitment to Child Safety Standards

St Patrick’s Primary School maintains a Child Safety Policy outlining key elements of its approach to creating and sustaining a Child Safe environment. The Policy has been developed by the Leadership Team in consultation with staff members and affirms the school’s commitment to a ‘zero tolerance’ towards child abuse and its commitment to upholding the best interest of children. The Policy also demonstrates a commitment to keeping students and young people safe and how it actively works to listen to and empower students at St Patrick’s Primary School.

The school’s Child Safety Policy is displayed in the foyer of the Administration Building and in the Staffroom. The Policy is also made publically available to all members of the community via the School’s website. This policy and the accompanying Child Safety Code of Conduct are communicated to staff members, clergy, CRTs, volunteers & contractors prior to commencing work and at least annually and they are also embedded into core documents such as the Employee Handbook.

St Patrick’s Primary School reviews this policy every three years or more frequently as required when there has been a change to the work environment or work arrangements that may impact on the protection of children.

Maintaining & Communicating the School’s Code of Conduct to Ensure Child Safety

St Patrick’s Primary School maintains a Code of Conduct for all staff members, clergy, volunteers, CRTs and contractors that clearly defines workplace expectations including professional boundaries, ethical behaviours, as well as acceptable & unacceptable relationships.

St Patrick’s Primary School believes that by defining the expectation for all staff members, CRTs, clergy, volunteers and contractors relating to ‘Child Connected Work’ they are more likely to act appropriately. The Code of Conduct enables the school to take immediate action when an individual acts in an unacceptable manner, which may result in disciplinary action including dismissal. This process is supported by the school’s complaints procedure.

The school’s Child Safety Code of Conduct is made publically available to all members of the community via the School’s website. The Code of Conduct is communicated to new staff...
members clergy, CRTs, volunteers & contractors prior to commencing work and at least annually and they are also embedded into core documents such as the Employee Handbook. Members of the Leadership Team vigilantly monitor professional behaviour & regularly remind staff members, CRTs, clergy, volunteers and contractors of their responsibilities at the commencement of each school term & at Staff Meetings.

St Patrick’s Primary School reviews its Child Safety Code of Conduct every three years or more frequently in the event of a complaint, or when there has been a change to the work environment or work arrangements that may impact on the protection of children.
Standard Two – Child Safety Policy

Introduction
St Patrick’s Primary School is committed to providing a safe environment for all students and young people and takes active steps to protect them against abuse. To achieve this the school has developed and actively enforces Child Safety Strategies to ensure that any person involved in ‘child connected work’ is aware of their obligations & responsibilities for ensuring the safety of all children under their care.

In accordance with requirements of the Victorian Government’s Ministerial Order No 870, St Patrick’s Primary School maintains a culture of ‘no tolerance’ to child abuse and to support this has established minimum Child Safety Standards.

Purpose
The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate St Patrick’s Primary School’s commitment to ensuring Child Safety and to illustrate the measures implemented by the school to maintain a safe education environment, as well as processes for responding to suspected abuse.

Scope
This policy & associated procedures apply to all staff members (teaching & non-teaching), clergy, casual relief staff, volunteers, and contractors engaged by the school.

Commitment to Child Safety
All students & young people attending St Patrick’s Primary School have the right to feel safe. The school affirms its commitment to child safety by adopting a ‘zero tolerance’ to child abuse and by actively implementing and managing strategies to help protect children from harm.

Initiatives undertaken to ensure the safety of students and young people at St Patrick’s Primary School include the following:

» An annual assessment of the effectiveness of its Child Safety Management Strategies to identify areas for improvement.
» A Code of Conduct defining workplace expectations including professional boundaries, ethical behaviours and acceptable & unacceptable relationships.
» Processes for the recruitment, support, training & supervision of staff members, clergy, casual relief staff, volunteers, and contractors who participate in ‘Child Connected Work’.
» Procedures for responding to and reporting suspected Child Abuse.
» Inclusion & empowerment of all students & young people in the establishment of Child Safety strategies.
» A commitment that promotes safety of Indigenous children, children with disabilities and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
St Patrick’s Primary School maintains policies, procedures and strategies to create a child safe environment in the following areas.

**Risk Management**
St Patrick’s Primary School recognises the importance of minimising the potential of Child Abuse or harm and uses this process to inform our policies, procedures and activity planning. In addition to general Occupational Health & Safety risks the school proactively manages risk via a formal assessment process.

**Code of Conduct**
St Patrick’s Primary School enforces a Code of Conduct for all staff members, clergy, casual relief teachers, volunteers, and contractors that clearly defines workplace expectations including professional boundaries, ethical behaviours and acceptable & unacceptable relationships.

This Code of Conduct aims to provide guidance and support to individuals so that they feel valued, respected and fairly treated. It is provided to any person engaged in ‘Child Connected Work’ and is available on the school website & in the Employee Handbook.

**Recruitment, Support, Training & Supervision**
St Patrick’s Primary School adopts Administrative & Human Resource practices to ensure its screening, recruitment & performance management processes identify and engage the most suitable candidates for positions available at the school. Recruitment and screening processes, as well as Police and Working With Children’s Checks are minimum requirements for those engaged in ‘Child Connected Work’.

Staff Members are provided with regular development opportunities, support, supervision & training to assist with addressing child safety matters.

**Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Concerns or Abuse**
St Patrick’s Primary School has appointed a Child Safety Officer (Deputy principal) with specific responsibilities for responding to reports or complaints made by any member of the school community relating to child safety concerns or abuse. The school’s Child Safety Officer works closely with members of the leadership team, staff members, clergy, casual relief teachers, volunteers, contractors, students and the parent community to ensure Child Safety Standards are maintained and all child safety complaints, suspected abuse, disclosures or breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct are immediately addressed.

Where staff members have significant concerns for the wellbeing of a student or young person they are mandated by law to report their concerns immediately to the Principal, Child Safety Officer or a Members of the Leadership Team before contacting DHHS Child Protection. Staff members will be supported through all aspects of the reporting process.

The school’s reporting & complaints procedure is located on the school website.

**Inclusion & empowerment of all students & young people**
St Patrick’s Primary School works with students to ensure that they are empowered to understand their rights, recognise what abuse is and encourage them to speak up when they feel uncomfortable or afraid. Staff members actively encourages students & young people to express their views on matters that directly affect them. The school educates students and young people on strategies they can adopt if they feel unsafe.

**Valuing Diversity**
St Patrick’s Primary School values diversity and does not tolerate discriminatory practices. To achieve this the school:

» Promotes the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Indigenous children and their families.
» Promotes the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from cultural and/or linguistically different backgrounds.
» Welcome children with disabilities and their families and actively promotes their participation.

**Review of this Policy**
St Patrick’s Primary School reviews its Child Safety Code of Conduct every three years more frequently in the event of a complaint or when there has been a change to the work environment or work arrangements that may impact on the protection of children.
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.


Victorian Government 2005, Children, Youth and Families Act

Victorian Government 1958, Crimes Act

Victorian Government Department of Health & Human Services 2016, Resource 1 - Good leadership and governance in child safe organisations

Victorian Government Department of Health & Human Services 2016, Resource 2 - Child safe policy and statement of commitment

Victorian Government Department of Health & Human Services 2016, Resource 3 - Code of conduct (including sample code of conduct)

Victorian Government Department of Health & Human Services 2016, Resource 4 - Human resources practices for child safe organisations

Victorian Government Department of Health & Human Services 2016, Resource 5 - Recruitment practices for child safe organisations

Victorian Government Department of Health & Human Services 2016, Resource 6 - What to do when an allegation of child abuse is made

Victorian Government Department of Justice 2016, Betrayal of Trust Implementation

Victorian Government 2006, Education and Training Reform Act


Victorian Government 2010, Equal Opportunity Act

Victorian Government 1988, Privacy Act

Victorian Government 2005 Working with Children Act 2005

Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority 2016, Child Safety Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety


Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority 2016, Child Safety Standard 4: Staff Selection Checklist

Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority 2016, Child Safety Standard 5: What to do when an allegation of child abuse is made

Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority 2016, *Child Safety Standard 7: Empowerment and participation of children*