



CHILD SAFE POLICY.

At the heart of our Child Safe Policy is the bible quotation

"I shall look for the lost one, bring back the stray, bandage the wounded and make the weak strong. I shall be a true shepherd to them." (Ezekeil 34:16)

At St Mary's Catholic Primary School we believe a safe and supportive school is described in the following way:

In a safe and supportive school, the risk from all types of harm is minimized, diversity is valued and all members of the school community feel respected and included and can be confident that they will receive support in the face of any threats to their safety or wellbeing. (National Safe Schools Framework)

1.0 PURPOSE OR RATIONALE

This policy was written to demonstrate the strong commitment of the whole school community of St Mary's Catholic Primary School leaders, staff, volunteers, students, their families, to child safety and to provide an outline of the policies and procedures developed to keep everyone safe from harm, including all forms of abuse.

2.0 COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

All students enrolled, and any child visiting, have a right to feel safe and be safe. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we have zero tolerance to child abuse. We aim to create a child safe and child friendly environment where children feel safe and are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety.

The Child Safety Officers are the Student Wellbeing Coordinator, supported by the Principal. These people, in consultation with the staff team will monitor and review all strategies and protocols relating to child safety and be responsible for creating and maintaining a child safe environment. The policy will be reviewed every 3 years.

- The community will be made aware of strategies, roles, protocols and procedures through the school policies being available on the school website. There will also be reference in our school essence statement, school newsletter and at Community Leadership Team meetings, held monthly.

- Briefing sessions with staff will be held annually to ensure clear understanding of policy.

- Child safety is a standing item on staff meeting agendas.

- Staff to consult with Child Safety Officers on issues and concerns around child safety.

3.0 CHILDREN'S RIGHTS TO SAFETY AND PARTICIPATION

The staff and volunteers of St Mary's Catholic Primary School encourage students to express their views. We listen to their suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them. We actively encourage all students to openly express their views and feel comfortable about giving voice to the things that are important to them.

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

- School Code of Behaviour and Behaviour Management Plan (VRQA)

- Kids Matter program.

- Students work with staff, and supported by Mindset Mastery, in the area of Growth Mindset that identifies and promotes the characteristics and features of resilient, self regulated, and confident people.

- Students are surveyed annually to gather feedback regarding student voice, participation, safety and mindset.

- Students engage in Circle Time activities to express concerns or questions about safety, as well as social/emotional issues.

- Counseling can be made available for students, parents and teachers, to communicate independently, any concerns or issues relating to safety or social/emotional wellbeing.

- Each level in the school has an established set of behaviours, negotiated with students to which all people working and learning in that area are held accountable.

These norms are intrinsically linked to our core beliefs and values, displayed prominently in our school.

•Students participate in programs such as Life Ed, First Aid and sexuality education as a means to deliver appropriate education about standards of behaviour.

•Student voice is promoted through visual learning that is documented and displayed throughout the school.

4.0 VALUING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

We value and celebrate diversity, especially cultural diversity, and we do not tolerate discriminatory practices. To achieve this we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students and their families
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) and their families
- promote the personal safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability and make them feel welcome and part of all aspects of school life.

5.0 RECRUITING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

St Mary's Catholic Primary School will apply the most thorough and rigorous standards in the recruitment and screening of staff and volunteers. We interview and conduct referee checks on all staff and volunteers and require police checks and Working With Children Checks (WWCC) for all staff and volunteers. Our commitment to Child Safety and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements for staff and volunteer positions.

Each job or category of jobs for St Mary's staff that involves child connected work has a clear statement that sets out: A. the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety; and B. the job occupant's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety.

All applicants for jobs that involve child connected work for St Mary's are informed about the school's child safety practices (including the code of conduct).

In accordance with school policy, St Mary's will make reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about a person whom it proposes to engage to

perform child connected work:

- A. Working with Children Check status, or similar check;
- B. proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications;
- C. the person's history of work involving children; and
- D. references that address the person's suitability for the job and working with children.

St Mary's will ensure that appropriate supervision or support arrangements are in place in relation to: A) the induction of new school staff into the school's policies, codes, practices, and procedures governing child safety and child connected work; and B) monitoring and assessing a job occupant's continuing suitability for child connected work. This will be done through annual review meetings, along with coaching conversations involving Leadership.

All volunteers and contractors involving child connected work will have a current working with children check, or police check, and will be supervised by staff at all times.

6.0 SUPPORTING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

St Mary's Catholic Primary School provides support and supervision to all staff and volunteers so people feel valued, respected, affirmed in their work and fairly treated. We have a Code of Conduct to provide guidance to our staff and volunteers, all of whom receive training on the requirements of the Code. Please refer to our Code of Conduct.

7.0 REPORTING A CHILD SAFETY CONCERN OR COMPLAINT

Our school records any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Code of Conduct, and store the records in accordance with security and privacy requirements. Our complaints and disclosure processes are outlined and detailed in the following policies and procedures

Child Safety Officers are to respond and make any reports of allegations of suspected child abuse.

The Child Safety Officers are to follow the procedures as set out in the mandatory reporting policy.

The Child Safety Officers are to:

- Comply with all legal requirements to report child abuse to the appropriate authorities through the robust implementation of processes that are accessible to all members

of the community.

- Provide ongoing support, or referrals for support, to alleged victims, their families and affected staff as required.
- Provide access to and contact details for internal and/ or external expertise so that staff have access to advice when managing child safety incidents.
- Make, secure and retain records of the allegation of abuse and subsequent actions.
- Review organisational responses to disclosures and reporting of concern to help drive continuous improvement.

Ensure that all staff complete annually the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET) child safety online module/s and records of completion are maintained. Please refer to our Mandatory Reporting Policy, Occupational Health & Safety Policy, as well as our Pastoral Care Policy for further information regarding:

Child Safe Reporting and Responding Policy

Child Safe Reporting Procedure

Complaints & Disclosure Policy

Complaints Procedure

Disclosure of Abuse or Harm Procedure

Child Safe Responding Procedure

Student Wellbeing Coordinators Deb Owens, supported by Principal Brendan Maher, have been appointed as Child Safety Officer with specific responsibility for responding to any complaints made by staff, volunteers, parents or students in relation to Child Safety.

8.0 RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk management is an approach that minimises the potential for child abuse or harm to occur. Our Risk Management Plan as noted in our Occupational Health & Safety Policy,

outlines and details all aspects of risk across our whole school environment (on site and off site school activities) with specific activity risk assessments. In addition to our general Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse and harm to our students.

9.0 POLICY REVIEW

This policy is reviewed every three years and we undertake to seek feedback from students, parents, carers, staff and volunteers.

Policy Ratified: May 7th 2019

Next Review date: May 2021