

St John's Catholic Parish Primary School is a school which operates with the consent of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne and is owned, operated and governed by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS), where formation and education are based on the principles of Catholic doctrine, and where the teachers are outstanding in true doctrine and uprightness of life.

## Introduction

At St John's, we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of our school. Our commitment is drawn from and inherent to 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](#)).

The person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ's teaching: this is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school

([The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium](#), n. 9).

### St John's Vision Statement

Given St John's proud history and tradition within the Heidelberg community, we strive to empower the school's motto, 'Labora et ora' [Work and pray]

We aspire to:

- Support everyone's journey in faith and personal relationship with their God
- Engage and inspire a commitment to being lifelong learners
- Develop confidence and a commitment to personal excellence
- Encourage compassion for those in need and be welcoming and inclusive of others

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## Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to demonstrate the strong commitment of St John's to the care, safety and wellbeing of all students at our school. It provides an outline of the policies, procedures and strategies developed to keep students safe from harm, including all forms of abuse in our school environment, on campus, online and in other locations provided by the school.

This Policy takes 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. 870](#).

This Policy applies to school staff, including school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy. It should be read in conjunction with the following related school policies and procedures:

PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to Abuse – Reporting obligations

Child Safety Code of Conduct

Reportable Conduct Policy.

This policy applies to school staff, including school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy.

## Principles

Catholic schools have a moral, legal and mission-driven responsibility to create nurturing school environments where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard, and they are safe and feel safe ([CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety](#)).

The following principles underpin our commitment to child safety at St John's :

All students deserve, as a fundamental right, safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect.

Our school works in partnership with families and the community to ensure that they are engaged in decision-making processes, particularly those that have an impact on child safety and protection.

All students have the right to a thorough and systematic education in all aspects of personal safety, in partnership with their parents/carers.

All adults in our school, including teaching and non-teaching staff, clergy, volunteers and contractors, have a responsibility to care for children and young people, to positively promote their wellbeing and to protect them from any kind of harm or abuse.

The policies, guidelines and codes of conduct for the care, wellbeing and protection of students are based on honest, respectful and trusting relationships between adults and children and young people.

Policies and practices demonstrate compliance with legislative requirements and cooperation 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 school leadership.

Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained, with information being provided to those who have a right or a need to be informed, either legally or pastorally.

## Definitions

**Child** means a child enrolled as a student at the school.

**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](#)).

**Child safety** encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse ([Ministerial Order No. 870](#)).

**Child neglect** includes a failure to provide the child with an adequate standard of nutrition, medical care, clothing, shelter or supervision to the extent that the health and physical development of the child is significantly impaired or placed at serious risk ([PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#)).

**Child physical abuse** generally consists of any non-accidental infliction of physical violence on a child by any person ([PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#)).

**Child sexual abuse** 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](#)).

**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** 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](#)).

**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:** 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](#)).

**Reportable conduct:** Five types of reportable conduct are listed in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic.) (as amended by the *Children Legislation Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Act 2017*). These include:

- sexual offences (against, with or in the presence of a child)
- sexual misconduct (against, with or in the presence of a child)
- physical violence (against, with or in the presence of a child)
- behaviour that is likely to cause significant emotional or psychological harm
- significant neglect.

**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 the school

online school environments (including email and intranet systems)

other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events) ([Ministerial Order No. 870](#)).

**School staff** 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](#)).

## Policy commitments

All students enrolled at St John's 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.

### Our commitment to our students

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

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.

### 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 staff (school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy)**

We commit to providing all St John's 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 Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct, and staff responsibilities to report concerns.

We commit to listening to all concerns voiced by St John's staff, clergy, volunteers and contractors about keeping children and young people safe from harm.

We commit to providing opportunities for St John's school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.

## **Responsibilities and organisational arrangements**

Everyone employed or volunteering at St John's has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all students is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make ([CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety](#)).

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

- Mrs Maureen Stella - Principal
- Ms Elizabeth Whiting - Deputy Principal, Wellbeing & Learning and Teaching Leader
- Mrs Connie Bandiera - Religious Education and Literacy Leader
- Mrs Judy Doupe - Learning Diversity Leader
- Mrs Marnie Power - eLearning Leader
- Mr Wayne Daniell - Mathematics
- Miss Nicole Costin - Classroom Teacher - OHS (Occupational Health and Safety - representative)
- and all remaining staff

## **Guide to responsibilities of school leadership**

The Principal, the school governing authority and school leaders at St John's 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 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. 870](#)

ensuring the school takes specific action to protect children from abuse in line with the three new criminal offences introduced under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.) and in line with [PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#).

## Guide to responsibilities of school staff

Responsibilities of school staff (school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy) include:

treating children and young people with dignity and respect, acting with propriety, providing a duty of care, and protecting children and young people in their care

following the legislative and internal school 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

undertaking regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to child safety, and the wellbeing of children and young people

assisting children and young people to develop positive, responsible and caring attitudes and behaviours which recognise the rights of all people to be safe and free from abuse

following the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct.

## Organisational arrangements

The Principal has the overall leadership role in monitoring and responding to the policy, procedures and practices for child safety in St John's in accordance with this Policy.

The Child Safety team includes the Principal and all members of the Leadership Team. The Student Wellbeing Leader is the Child Safety Officer.

At St John's, we expect school 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 school. All school staff must remain familiar with the relevant laws, the code of conduct, and policies and procedures in relation to child protection, and 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 in order to safeguard them against abuse and/or neglect.

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

The Principal takes responsibility to inform all staff, parents and carers, contractors and visitors in the school environment about the Child Safety Standards and ensures that the school protocols are adhered to.

### Protocols for Staff:

- Staff updated with any changes to the Child Safety standards at Staff Meetings
- Child Safety policy is reviewed annually by Child Safety leadership team

- Principal to use [Checklist for the Employment of Staff](#) (Attachment 1 Guidelines on the Employment of Staff in Catholic Schools) whenever employing new staff
- Any new staff sign the [Code of Conduct](#) as part of their induction and are familiarised with the Child Safety Policy and Reporting Obligations
- The Child Safety Policy and Reporting Obligations will be shared with staff annually

#### **Protocols for Parents and Carers:**

- Parents and carers are updated with any changes to the Child Safety Standards via the newsletter, website, tiqbiz (App) in a timely manner
- Parents and carers are required to sign the Code of Conduct . The signed forms will be stored in students' confidential files. A register of signed forms will be maintained by the school.
- All Parents and carers are encouraged to have a current WWCC and to register St John's as an employer
- The WWCC card will be checked and filed in the office register
- The Code of Conduct will be shared via the newsletter and parent information sessions each year
- Parent and carer visitors/volunteers need to sign in/sign out at the front office and wear their visitor badge while on the premises

#### **Protocols for Volunteers:**

- Principal to liaise with all volunteers to ensure their compliance of the Child Safety Standards using the Checklist for the engagement of volunteers in Catholic Schools (ref: Guidelines for the Engagement of Volunteers in a Catholic School, Attachment 1)
- Once approved by the Principal the volunteers are required to sign the Code of Conduct and show their WWCC. The WWCC card will be checked and filed in the office register along with the signed Code of Conduct.
- Volunteers need to sign in/sign out at the front office and wear their visitor badge while on the premises

**Protocols for Visitors:** (for example: prospective parents and employees, invited speakers, representatives of the Church attending school events, families and community members attending school events, representatives of community, business and service groups, local members of the State and Federal Parliaments, Catholic Education Melbourne staff, those who are conducting business such as commercial salespeople)

- Visitors need to sign in/sign out at the front office and wear their visitor badge while on the premises
- Community events such as Grandparents Day, require visitors to sign in/out and to write their name on labels provided by the office staff

#### **Protocols for Contractors:**

- Principal to liaise with all contractors to ensure their compliance of the Child Safety Standards using the [Checklist for the Engagement of Contractors Engaged in Child-Connected Work in Catholic Schools](#) (ref: Guidelines for the Engagement of Contractors in a Catholic School, Attachment 1)
- All contractors are expected to have a current WWCC
- Contractors are required to sign the [Code of Conduct](#) and show their WWCC . The WWCC card will be checked, photocopied and filed in the office register along with the signed Code of Conduct.
- Contractors need to sign in/sign out at the front office and wear their visitor badge while on the premises

## Student safety and participation

At St John's, we actively encourage all students to openly express their views and feel comfortable about giving voice to the things that are important to them.

We teach students about what they can do if they feel unsafe and enable them to understand, identify, discuss and report 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. Teaching and learning strategies that acknowledge and support student agency and voice are implemented.

We have developed appropriate education about:

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

The Student Wellbeing Action team will be responsible for the Child Safety Curriculum.

Resources: Keeping Safe - Department of Education SA Keeping Kids Safe: Daniel Morcombe Foundation

Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships DET

## Reporting and responding

Our school records any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and stores the records in accordance with security and privacy requirements. Our school complies with legal obligations that relate to managing the risk of child abuse under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.), the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.) and the recommendations of the [Betrayal of Trust](#) report.

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

Our school's [PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to Abuse – Reporting obligations](#), updated on 7 6 2021 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.

Our policy assists staff, volunteers and families to:

- identify the indicators of a child or young person who may be in need of protection
- understand how a reasonable belief is formed
- make a report of a child or young person who may be in need of protection
- comply with mandatory reporting obligations under child protection law, and their legal obligations relating to child abuse and grooming under criminal law.

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

School staff should use the template: [Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#) to document any incident, disclosure or suspicion that a child has been or is at risk of being abused.

When completing this template the aim should be to provide as much information as possible. This information will be critical to any reports and may be sought at a later date if the matter is the subject of Court proceedings. These notes may also later assist you if you are required to provide evidence to support any decisions.

This template should be used in conjunction with the [Staff Four Critical Actions](#):

1. Responding to an Emergency
2. Reporting to Authorities
3. Contacting Parents/Carers
4. Providing ongoing support

If Visitors or Parents and Carers have any concerns regarding the wellbeing and/or safety of a child in the school environment they must notify the Principal. The Principal is responsible for initiating the reporting process.

Reference: [Protect: Identifying and Responding to all types of Child Abuse](#)

Our complaints and disclosure processes are outlined and detailed in the following policies and procedures:

Grievance and Complaints Policy [Staff](#) [Parents and Carers](#)

[Behaviour Management Policy](#)

[Anti Bullying Policy](#)

[Wellbeing Policy](#)

## Screening and recruitment of school staff

St John's 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 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 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 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 make all reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about any person we propose to engage:

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.

We will also ensure that appropriate supervision or support arrangements are in place in relation to the induction of new school staff into the school's policies, codes, practices and procedures governing child safety and child-connected work.

We have procedures and processes for monitoring and assessing the continuing suitability of school staff to work with children, including regular reviews of the status of Working with Children Checks and staff professional registration requirements such as Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration.

St John's implements 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.*

## Child safety – education and training for school staff

St John's 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.

At least annually, our professional learning and training addresses:

- staff's individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse
- child abuse risks in the school environment
- our school's current child safety standards.

Professional Learning and Training:

- Staff are kept up to date with any changes to the Child Safety policy and the Child Safe Standards and participate in an annual review.
- Staff complete the online Mandatory Reporting module annually and give their certificate of completion to the Deputy Principal. This is kept in staff records.

Induction:

- All new staff are required to read and adhere to the Child Safety Policy and the Child Safe Standards
- All new staff are required to sign the Code of Conduct. This is placed in their staff file.
- All allied health, volunteers and contractors are required to read and adhere to the Child Safety Policy and the Child Safe Standards
- All allied health, volunteers and contractors are required to sign the Code of Conduct. This is stored in a Code of Conduct register.

## Risk management

At St John's 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 periodically review our risk management strategies for child safety, and ensure that the strategies change as needed and as new risks arise.

- The St John's [Child Safety Risk Register](#) is maintained so that any areas of concern are identified and controls put into place.
- Essential Service Maintenance check (checking of doors and locks) is conducted monthly by the Deputy Principal. Any issues are recorded in the Essential Service Log.
- A Risk Management walk will be conducted annually by members of the Leadership Team and/or a Parent Representative.

## Relevant legislation

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

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

*Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic.)*

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

*Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (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:** 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.

## Related policies

### Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) guidelines

[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](#)

### Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS) policies

[Policy 2.19: Identifying and responding to abuse – Reporting obligations](#)

[Policy 2.20: Complaints](#)

[Policy 2.26: Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools](#)

### School policies

[Child Safety Code of Conduct](#) - staff, allied health, parish priest and School Advisory Board

● [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#) - Parents and Carers

● [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#) - student

[PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to Abuse – Reporting obligations](#)