



ST MARGARET MARY'S CHILD SAFE POLICY

St Margaret Mary's 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.

Child Safety Policy

February, 2021

1. Introduction

At **St Margaret Mary's Primary School**, 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 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](#)).

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

To create and maintain a safe and nurturing culture, St Margaret Mary's will actively and continually develop and review all policies, processes and practices, informed by emerging thinking and evidence. At all times, the ongoing safety and wellbeing of all children and young people will be the primary focus of care and decision-making, with particular attention paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the strong commitment of **St Margaret Mary's Primary School** 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 Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in [Ministerial Order No. 870](#).

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

This policy should be read in conjunction with following related school policies and procedures:

1. School PROTECT: Identifying and responding to abuse– Reporting obligations
2. Child Safety Code of Conduct
3. Reportable Conduct Policy

3. 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 Margaret Mary's Primary School:

- 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/guardians/caregivers.
- 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.

4. Definitions used in this Policy

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

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. ([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 (Children's Legislation Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Act 2017)*.

These include:

1. sexual offences (against, with, or in the presence of, a child)
2. sexual misconduct (against, with, or in the presence of, a child)
3. physical violence (against, with, or in the presence of, a child)
4. behaviour that is likely to cause significant emotional or psychological harm
5. 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) a campus of the school
- (b) online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- (c) 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:

- (a) directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
- (b) a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)
- (c) a minister of religion. ([Ministerial Order No. 870](#))

5. Policy Commitments

All students enrolled at **St Margaret Mary's Primary School** 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

- (a) We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people enrolled in our school.
- (b) We commit to providing children and young people with positive and nurturing experiences.
- (c) 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.
- (d) We commit to taking action to ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse or harm.
- (e) We commit to teaching children and young people the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing.
- (f) We commit to seeking input and feedback from students regarding the creation of a safe school environment.

Our commitment to parents and carers

- (a) We commit to communicating honestly and openly with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children.
- (b) We commit to engaging with, and listening to, the views of parents and carers about our child-safety practice, policies and procedures.
- (c) We commit to transparency in our decision-making with parents and carers where it will not compromise the safety of children or young people.
- (d) We commit to acknowledging the cultural diversity of students and families, and being sensitive to how this may impact on student safety issues.
- (e) 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)

- (a) We commit to providing all **St Margaret Mary's Primary School** staff with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles. This will include regular and appropriate learning opportunities.
- (b) 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.
- (c) We commit to listening to all concerns voiced by **St Margaret Mary's Primary School** staff, clergy, volunteers, and contractors about keeping children and young people safe from harm.
- (d) We commit to providing opportunities for **St Margaret Mary's Primary School** 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

Everyone employed or volunteering at **St Margaret Mary's Primary School** 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.

[\(CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety\)](#)

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

The Child Safety team consists of:

Fiona Dearn -Principal

Claire White- Deputy Principal

Renee Ladner- Deputy Principal

Maria Lantieri-Student Wellbeing Leader

6.1 Guide to Responsibilities of School Leadership

The principal, the school governing authority and school leaders **Fiona Dearn (Principal), Claire White (Deputy Principal) Renee Ladner (Deputy Principal) and Maria Lantieri (Student Wellbeing Leader)** at **St Margaret Mary's Primary School** recognise their particular responsibility to ensure the development of preventative and proactive strategies that promote a culture of openness, awareness of and shared responsibility for child safety. 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 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 the [PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#).

6.2 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.

6.3 Organisational Arrangements

The Principal has the overall leadership role in monitoring and responding to the policy, procedures and practices for child safety in [St Margaret Mary's Primary School](#) in accordance with this policy.

A Child Safety Team assists the Principal.

This consists of the Deputy Principals and the Student Wellbeing Leader.

- The Child Safety Team works in identifying and mitigating risks in child safety.
- The Child Safety Team also supports the principal to monitor implementation of school policies, procedures and practices and to identify professional learning.

St Margaret Mary's Primary School website and newsletter will provide information to keep parents and carers informed of child safety commitments, procedures and arrangements.

7. Expectation of our School Staff – Child Safety Code of Conduct

At **St Margaret Mary's Primary School** community, 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 to comply with all requirements. We have developed a **Child Safety Code of Conduct** [STMM 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.

ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

All staff (teaching and non-teaching), volunteers, contractors, clergy and board/school council members are responsible for supporting the safety of children by:

- Adhering to the St Margaret Mary's School child safe policy at all times / upholding the St Margaret Mary's School statement of commitment to child safety at all times. · Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse.
- Treating everyone in the school community with respect (modelling positive and respectful relationships and acting in a manner that sustains a safe, educational and pastoral environment).
- Complying with our guidelines on physical contact with children. *A

- Listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another.
- Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child's self-identification).
- Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination).
- Promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities).
- Ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child. By working with children in an open and transparent way – other adults should always know about the work you are doing with children. *B
- Respecting the privacy of children and their families, and only disclosing information to people who have a need to know. *C
- Reporting any allegations of child abuse to the Principal, Vice Principal or Student Wellbeing Leader (*Child Safety Team*).
- Reporting any child safety concerns to the Child Safety Team.
- If an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child/ren are safe.
- Encouraging children to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

All staff (teaching and non-teaching), volunteers, contractors, clergy and board/school council members must not:

- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse
- Seek to use children in any way to meet the needs of adults including doing errands of a personal nature. *D
- Develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children).
- Exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (E.g.: inappropriate sitting on laps). *A
- Put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors, allowing children to work out of sight with visitor). *
- Initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves such as toileting or changing clothes
- Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities).
- Use inappropriate language in the presence of children.
- Express personal views on cultures, race, ethnicity, sexuality or disabilities in the presence of students.
- Discriminate against any child because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability. *E · Maintain relationships with a student or young person and their families outside of school without the knowledge of the Principal, or Child Safety Team. *E
- Exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking site or email addresses with children. *E
- Have any online contact with a child (including social media, email, instant messaging etc.) or their family (unless necessary e.g.: providing families with online newsletters or assisting students with their school

work). *E

- Use any personal communication channels/ device such as a personal email account. · Photograph or video a child without the consent of the parent or guardian. · Work with children whilst under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Consume alcohol without the consent of the Principal or a member of the Leadership Team at school, at a school event or in the presence of students or young people.

Elaborations

***A: Physical contact with children at St Margaret Mary's Primary School.**

In a school setting there are daily occurrences where teachers may have physical contact with children. This is more likely to happen with younger children and will seldom be necessary with older children. Any physical contact must always take place in an open area where other people are present.

All personnel are strongly advised to think and consider any physical contact with children and judge whether it is NEEDED and APPROPRIATE and whether a non-physical response could suffice.

Appropriate physical contact with children could include:

- Helping or assisting a sick, injured or distressed child.
- Holding hands when escorting children.
- Shaking hands.
- Helping a child try on a costume etc.
- Helping a child with toileting if required.
- Assisting a child with a disability with a task if required.
- Modelling a sport or other skill. (E.g. how to hold a bat or a musical instrument). · Passing affirmative contact in the presence of others (high 5's, pat on the back).

Inappropriate Physical Contact with children includes:

- Any contact of a sexual nature.
- Any contact of a violent or abusive nature (including yelling, 'losing it' even if no bodily contact made).
- Any contact of an overly affectionate nature, for example, kissing, cuddling.
- Any contact made in anger or frustration, for example, pulling a child into line, grasping a child in any manner while giving a reprimand etc.
- Any contact initiated by the child that crosses personal boundaries, for example, a child offering to massage an adult's shoulder etc., a protracted hug or cuddle, kissing. In these situations, the contact should be declined and /or diverted and the child distracted and gently rebuffed. Repeated instances should be noted and discussed with a member of the Child Safety Team.

***B: Working alone with children at St Margaret Mary's Primary School.**

In the school setting there are frequent times when adults are alone with children. This can include situations such as but not limited to:

- Individual tuition, for example, music, learning support.
- The administering of first aid or counselling.
- Escorting a child from one place to another.
- Assisting a child with toileting.

In all cases where an adult is alone with a child all reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that the activity is legitimate, open and transparent.

***C: Privacy**

All staff and volunteers are bound by the St Margaret Mary's Primary School Privacy policy. The school recognises that issues surrounding the Child Safe Policy are especially private and extra care should be taken to ensure prescribed protocols on the sharing and storage of information are followed.

***D: Children used to meet the needs of adults**

The school recognises that children, staff and volunteers work together in many ways to achieve various outcomes. In many instances, adults are required to instruct children to assist in tasks not specifically linked to teaching and learning. These tasks may include tidying up, helping set up for an event, unloading or packing away equipment etc. The school endorses these tasks as part of normal daily school life and recognises that they help build a sense of responsibility. However, tasks that have no link with the running of the school but are more personal and adult focused, such as fetching lunch or refreshment for the teacher, are not to take place. Although children may enjoy this personal responsibility, the use of children to meet the personal need of an adult, even if an innocent one, blurs the boundaries and relationship roles and leaves children vulnerable to agreeing to inappropriate requests from adults

*** E: Exchange of Personal contact details with children/families; Out of Hours Contact.**

No adult at St Margaret Mary's Primary School should exchange personal details with a child. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Home address, mobile or landline telephone numbers
- Private email addresses
- Online gaming or social networking platforms

Normal email communication with families is appropriate via school email and with students as required e.g. distribution of homework.

The St Margaret Mary's Primary School Code of Conduct for the Behaviour with Children applies to all staff (teaching & non-teaching), clergy, contractors, volunteers and board/school council members at St Margaret Mary's Primary School in all settings, both in and out of school, including excursions and camps, etc.

All staff (teaching & non-teaching), clergy, contractors, volunteers and board/school council members at St Margaret Mary's Primary School are required to sign a copy of the Code of Conduct for the Behaviour with Children as of Semester 2, 2016.

A copy of this signed code will be kept in staff and contractors/volunteers/board and school council members files.

Failure to Comply With This Code of Conduct:

Where a staff member (teaching & non-teaching), clergy, contractors, volunteers and board/school council members is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this Policy, St Margaret Mary's Primary School will take disciplinary action, including in the case of serious breaches, summary dismissal.

Acknowledgement

I have read and understood this Code of Conduct and agree to abide by it at all times.

Name:
Signature:
Date:

Principal: Fiona Dearn
Signature:
Date:

8. Student Safety and Participation

At **St Margaret Mary's Primary School** 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:

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

Strategies to promote child empowerment and participation:

The Principal, in consultation with appropriate bodies, will develop strategies to deliver appropriate education about:

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

Accessibility:

- The school will promote the Child Safety Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children.
- The school will publish the Child Safety Policy on the school's web site, and make it available to parents in hard copy.
- Copies of the policy will be emailed to parents annually. A copy of the Child safety Policy will be included in enrolment packs.

Promoting Inclusion of All Students & Their Families from diverse cultural backgrounds and those with disabilities.

St Margaret Mary's Primary School respects cultural differences and variance in parenting practices due to personal, cultural or religious beliefs. The School does not; however, accept that these differences reduce a child's right to be safe or the School's responsibility to protect them from harm.

St Margaret Mary's Primary School promotes safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds by:

- Demonstrating a 'zero tolerance' to discrimination
- Being respectful, inclusive & welcoming of families from a wide range of backgrounds
- Recognising times of importance to different cultures
- Ensuring the school's physical environment has a positive image of a range of cultures in terms of decoration & artwork. » Employing Staff Members that represent diversity within the local community. » Actively seeking out and talking to families about how they can be involved in child safety.

St Margaret Mary's Primary School promotes the safety of children with disabilities by:

- Acknowledging that children with disabilities are particularly vulnerable and ensures that its risk

management process considers their needs

- Demonstrating a 'zero tolerance' to discrimination
- Ensuring that the physical environment does not pose access difficulties
- Being responsive to families regarding specific measures that may be required to ensure the safe participation of children with disabilities
- Supporting Staff Members, other children & their families to understand and be inclusive of people with disabilities
- Considering how children with a disability and their families can be encouraged to participate in ensuring a safe environment.

9. 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**

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

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 criminal 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.

At **St Margaret Mary's Primary School**, if any member of our school community has concerns for a child's safety they need to discuss, they can notify the school principal, the deputy principal or the Student wellbeing Leader who are all members of the Child Safety Team.

If the principal or a member of the Child Safety Team are not available, then it should be discussed with a member of the school leadership team staff. Alternatively, any member of the school community may report directly to the responsible authority.

The staff member, supported by the **St Margaret Mary's Primary School** principal or a

member of the Child Safety Team will follow the step-by-step guide to making a report as outlined in the [Four Critical Actions](#) in [PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#).

10. Screening and Recruitment of School Staff

St Margaret Mary's Primary School 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 Margaret Mary's Primary School implements the following Guidelines:

- CECV Guidelines for 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.*

Position Advertisements:

When seeking to engage staff members, contract service providers or volunteers **St Margaret Mary's Primary School** clearly communicates its commitment to Child Safety in all job advertisements and duty statements. Statements encouraging only applicants who share the school's commitment to Child Safety will be incorporated as will those encouraging applications from Aboriginals, Torres Strait Islanders and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Assessing Potential Staff Members or Volunteers:

St Margaret Mary's Primary School will conduct a thorough assessment of potential candidates and volunteers prior to engaging them or authorising them to conduct 'Child Connected Work'

When assessing potential candidates and volunteers, members of the school Leadership Team, the school's Child Safety Team and others on the assessment panel will consider the following:

- What motivates the individual to work with children (personal and/or professional)
- Relevant & verifiable experience. » Understanding of Children's physical & emotional needs
- Understanding of professional boundaries
- Attitudes towards Children's rights and how these can be upheld Values (honesty, integrity, reliability, fairness and non-discrimination)
- Responses from referees

Responses to these indicators will determine a candidates or volunteers suitability to undertake 'Child Connected Work' and will be given sufficient 'weight' as part of the selection process.

Screening Processes:

St Margaret Mary's Primary School acknowledges the importance of assessing potential candidates and volunteers prior to engagement and is committed to undertaking a thorough & rigorous screening process.

The process of interviewing and screening potential candidates and volunteers remains confidential at all times. The school ensures that at least one member of the interview panel is responsible for and experienced in conducting reference checks.

Reference Checks:

When conducting reference checks the identified member of the interview panel will ask the following questions of the referee:

- Would you employ the applicant again?
- Do you have any concerns about the applicant working directly with children?
- Are you comfortable knowing that the applicant may at times work alone with children?
- Did the applicant have any disciplinary matters relating to them directly or about their adherence to the School's Code of Conduct?
- Can you provide an example of a time when you observed the applicant managing the behaviour of a child?

Any negative response or reluctance on behalf of the referee to any of the above mentioned questions will be viewed unfavourably and may result in the candidate being ineligible for the position.

Victorian Institute of Teaching Registration:

All teaching staff will be required to maintain current Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) Registration prior to being considered for employment. A copy of the teacher's current VIT registration will be taken and kept on their employee file.

Criminal Record Checks are a requirement of VIT Registration every five years and it is the staff member's responsibility, at their expense, to ensure that this is undertaken. A member of the Leadership Team will regularly monitor the currency of VIT Registrations via the School Portal on the VIT Website.

St Margaret Mary's Primary School ensures the currency of all VIT Registrations via maintenance of a VIT tab located within the School's Compliance Register. The currency of registration is regularly monitored.

Working With Children's Checks:

Working with Children's Checks (WWCC) will be required by all non-teaching staff, volunteers, members of the clergy and contractors engaged by the school. WWCC screen an individual's criminal record and professional conduct, acting as a mechanism for identifying those individuals who pose a risk to child safety.

A current WWCC (within 5 years) is required for all non-teaching staff, volunteers, members of the clergy and contractors and a copy must be provided to the school Administration Officer prior to being authorised to undertake 'Child Connected Works'. A member of the Leadership Team will regularly monitor the currency of WWCC.

Any member of the school community that wishes to participate in 'Child Connected Work' must provide the school with a copy of their current WWCC prior to being authorised to do so.

St Margaret Mary's Primary School ensures the currency of all WWCC via the maintenance of a WWCC tab located within the School's Compliance Register. The currency of WWCC is regularly monitored.

Police Checks:

St Margaret Mary's Primary School may request a Police Check for Administrative Staff, Cleaning Staff and others who may at times be permitted to work alone at the school.

The school acknowledges that Police Checks differ from WWCC and provide a list of offences that are disclosed from a person's national criminal record. It may look beyond those of a WWCC into areas of fraud & road offences. Police Checks may be requested by the school in addition to WWCC.

Screening of Casual Relief Teachers (CRTs):

Prior to being approved to undertake Casual Relief Teaching all CRTs must attend an interview with a member of the Leadership Team. Reference checks will be conducted by a member of the school's Leadership team or Child Safety Officer prior to any CRT being authorised to conduct work at the school. Where a CRT is engaged via an agency, the agency must be able to demonstrate that it maintains robust processes to support Child Safety. The agency must demonstrate sufficient screening and induction procedures. The school's Code of Conduct will also be provided to the agency to be embedded into their own induction documentation.

All CRTs must maintain current Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) Registration and provide this to the school prior to commencing work. CRTs will be provided with a copy of the School's Child Safety Code of Conduct and requested to acknowledge their understanding of its content, as well as their commitment to complying with it, prior to being authorised to commence work.

Screening of Volunteers:

Any volunteer including parents, guardians, care givers, grandparents, student teachers, work experience students who make a request or are approached by the school to participate in 'Child Connected Work' must provide a copy of a current Working With Children Checks (WWCC). This includes volunteers who anticipate assisting the school in any capacity, not limiting school camps, excursions, sporting events, classroom helpers, canteen etc.

All Volunteers are to be provided with a copy of the School's Child Safety Code of Conduct and asked to sign this prior to being permitted to conduct work on its behalf.

Where the volunteer is a work experience student the participating school must provide assurance to the Principal and /or the School Child Safety Team that the attending student has no prior convictions of any kind. Failure to disclose convictions will result in a request for the student to be removed from the program.

Screening of Contract Service Providers:

St Margaret Mary's Primary School ensures that any contract service provider it engages is suitably qualified, has assessed all risks associated with the works they are engaged to complete and holds all relevant licences and insurances.

Contractors will also be screened to ensure they do not pose a risk to students or other members of the school community prior to being authorised to commence work. Copies of Working with Children Checks (WWCC) are obtained for all Contractors. Where a WWCC has not been provided the Contractor or their workers are not permitted to conduct work in the presence of any student. A member of Staff must be present at all times.

All Contractors and their workers are to be provided with a copy of the School's Child Safety Code of Conduct and asked to sign this prior to being permitted to conduct work on its behalf.

Support, Training & Supervision of Employees & Volunteers to Ensure Child Safety:

Once Staff Members & Volunteers have commenced work St Margaret Mary's Catholic Primary School provides them with regular development opportunities, support, supervision & training to assist with addressing child safety matters.

Members of the School Leadership Team and the school's Child Safety Team are responsible for providing mentoring and support to Staff Members on all aspects relating to Child Safety & reporting. These school leaders are also governed with the responsibility of raising performance issues and required improvements with individual Staff Members, where required. They commit to meeting at least once a term to discuss observations and the effectiveness of the school's Child Safety Strategies.

All new staff members are mentored throughout the early phase of their employment. Their assigned mentor in conjunction with the School's Child Safety Team will provide guidance and support to new employees to assist them identify and address Child Safety matters.

Key Performance Indicators:

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are established and discussed with staff on an annual basis. The school has incorporated KPIs into staff Performance Management Plans that have a specific Child Safety Indicator. This indicator includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Staff Members are required to read and sign the School's Code of Conduct annually
- Maintain current VIT Registration or WWCC and provide copies to the school
- Staff Members are required to participate in identified Child Safety & Mandatory Reporting training, and provide a certificate of completion to a member of the Leadership Team or Child Safety Officer
- Staff Members must be able to demonstrate sufficient awareness of signs of child abuse and reporting requirements
- Staff Members must demonstrate how they provide a physical & psychologically safe environment, where the wellbeing of students & young people is nurtured

- Staff Members must demonstrate how they develop a positive, responsible and caring teaching and learning environment, which recognises the rights of all people to be safe and free from abuse
- Staff members must demonstrate how they foster an inclusive teaching and learning environment that values diversity and promotes a culture of empowerment of Aboriginal students including those with disabilities and from diverse cultural or linguistically different backgrounds

Training & Improvement Opportunities:

To further support Staff Members meet and exceed their KPIs for Child Safety the school identifies professional learning & training opportunities annually.

Learning & training opportunities supported by the school include, but are not limited to:

- Child Safety remains a regular Staff meeting agenda item to facilitate communication and consultation on all matters relating to Child Safety
- Annual induction into the School's Child Safety requirements
- Annual refresher on professional & legal obligations & responsibilities relating to Child Safety
- Annual refresher and acknowledgment of the School's Code of Conduct requirements
- Annual completion of the Victorian Department of Education's 'on-line' Mandatory Reporting Module

11. Child Safety – Education and Training for School Staff

St Margaret Mary's Primary School 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; and
- our school's current child safety standards.

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St Margaret Mary undertakes:

- Formal induction process including briefing on St Margaret Mary's Child Safety Policy
- Compulsory completion of the online training module for Mandatory Reporting for all teaching staff during Term 1
- To provide the opportunity for other staff to complete the training module
- At the commencement of each school year, Mandatory Reporting procedures are reviewed and reinforced at a formal staff briefing
- In October every year all St Margaret Mary's staff will be required to submit a photocopy of their updated VIT registration card or current WWCC to the principal.

12. Risk Management

At **St Margaret Mary's Primary School** we are committed to proactively and systematically identifying and

assessing risks to student safety across our whole school environment, and reducing or eliminating (where possible) all potential sources of harm. We document, implement, monitor and periodically review our risk management strategies for child safety and ensure that the strategies change as needed and as new risks arise.

The Child Safety Team will annually monitor and update the Risk Assessment Management Plan.

Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse If the school identifies risks of child abuse occurring in the school environment the Principal must make a record of those risks and specify the action(s) the school will take to reduce or remove the risks (risk controls)

Different risk controls may be necessary for particular groups of children depending on the nature of the risk and the diversity characteristics of children affected by the risk. As part of its risk management strategy and practices, the school will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls. At least annually, the school will provide appropriate guidance and training to the individual members of the school staff about:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse; ● child abuse risks in the school environment; and
- the school's current child safety standards.
- Risk management strategies have been developed within the following school policies: Further Risk

Management strategies may be found in the following School Policy documents:

- **Mandatory Reporting Policy**
- **Student Welfare Policy**
- **Student Wellbeing Policy**
- **Bullying & Harassment Prevention Policy**

13. 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:
 - a) **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.
 - b) **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.

- c) **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 Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Guidelines

- [CECV Guidelines for 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](#)

14.2 Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS) Policies

- [Policy 2.19: Child Protection – Reporting Obligations](#)
- [Policy 2.20: Complaints Policy](#)
- [Policy 2.26: Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools](#)

14.3 School Policies

- Child Safety Code of Conduct [STMM Code of Conduct](#)
- PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to Abuse - Reporting Obligations Policy

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

