

Catholic Ladies' College



Child Safe Policy

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Under the Stewardship of
Mary Aikenhead Ministries



LOVE HOPE COMPASSION JUSTICE



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1. Introduction

Catholic Ladies' College is a Mary Aikenhead Ministry in the tradition of the Sisters of Charity. We are called to develop in each member of our community a contemporary understanding and application of the charism of Mary Aikenhead and the spirituality of the Sisters of Charity, and the Mary Aikenhead Ministries' mission, vision and values of justice, love, compassion and hope.

At Catholic Ladies' College 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).

2. Purpose of the Policy and Statement of Commitment

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the strong commitment of Catholic Ladies' College 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. The College's Child Safe Policy has been approved and endorsed by the College's College Board and is regularly reviewed by the Board.

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](#). The seven minimum Standards are:

- Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety including through effective leadership arrangements
- Standard 2: A child safe policy or a statement of commitment to child safety
- Standard 3: A child safe code of conduct in accordance
- Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training, and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
- Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
- Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
- Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children

In implementing the minimum Child Safe Standards according to Ministerial Order No. 870, Catholic schools must be mindful of the diversity of students and school communities and consider the three principles of inclusion as part of each Standard. This involves making reasonable efforts to accommodate 'the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable'.

At Catholic Ladies' College we have a zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The College regards its child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture. This policy applies to school staff, including school employees, clergy, members of religious congregations, volunteers, and contractors and College Board directors.

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 Catholic Ladies' College:

- All students deserve, as a fundamental right, safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect.
- Our College works in partnership with families and the community to ensure that they are engaged in decision-making processes, particularly those that have an impact on child safety and protection.
- All students have the right to a thorough and systematic education in all aspects of personal safety, in partnership with their parents/guardians/caregivers.
- All adults in our College, including teaching and non-teaching staff, clergy, members of religious congregations, volunteers, and contractors and College Board directors, 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, members of religious congregations, volunteers, contractors, College Board directors, parents/legal guardians and students should feel free to raise concerns about child safety, knowing these will be taken seriously by the College Executive team.
- 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.
- Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Safe Code of Conduct and Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy.

4. Definitions used in this Policy

Child: A child or a young person enrolled as a student at the College.

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
 - (iii) 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, teachers, medical practitioners and nurses at a school are mandatory reporters under this Act. [PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#)

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](#)

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 Catholic Ladies' College have the right to feel safe and be safe. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we do not and will not tolerate child abuse. We aim to create a child-safe and child-friendly environment where children are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety. There is particular attention paid to the most vulnerable children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with a disability.

Our commitment to our students

- (a) We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all students enrolled at Catholic Ladies' College.
- (b) We commit to providing students with positive and nurturing experiences.
- (c) We commit to listening to students 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 students and young people are protected from abuse or harm.
- (e) We commit to teaching students 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/legal guardians and carers

- (a) We commit to communicating honestly and openly with parents/legal guardians and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their daughter(s).
- (b) We commit to engaging with, and listening to, the views of parents/legal guardians and carers about our child-safety practice, policies and procedures.



- (c) We commit to transparency in our decision-making with parents/legal guardians and carers where it will not compromise the safety of our students.
- (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 students from abuse.

Our commitment to our College staff (school employees, volunteers, contractors, clergy, members of religious congregations and College Board directors)

- (a) We commit to providing all Catholic Ladies' College 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 Safe Policy and Child Safe Code of Conduct, and staff responsibilities to report concerns.
- (c) We commit to listening to all concerns voiced by Catholic Ladies' College staff, clergy, members of religious congregations, volunteers, contractors and College Board directors about keeping children and young people safe from harm.
- (d) We commit to providing opportunities for Catholic Ladies' College employees, volunteers, contractors, clergy, members of religious congregations and College Board directors to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.

6. Responsibilities and Organisational Arrangements

Child protection is everyone's responsibility. At Catholic Ladies' College, all Directors of the College Board and staff, as well as direct and indirect volunteers, have a shared responsibility to understand and contribute to the safety and protection of children ([CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety](#))

The College has allocated roles and responsibilities for child safety as follows.

6.1 Guide to Responsibilities of School Leadership

The Principal, the school governing authority and school leaders at Catholic Ladies' College recognise their particular responsibility to ensure the development of preventative and proactive strategies that promote a culture of openness, awareness of and shared responsibility for child safety. Responsibilities include:

- creating an environment for students to be safe and to feel safe
- upholding high principles and standards for all staff, clergy, members of religious congregations, volunteers, and contractors
- promoting models of behaviour between adults and students 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 College 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 College Staff

Responsibilities of College staff (school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy, members of religious congregations) 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 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 College's Child Safe Code of Conduct.

6.3 Organisational Arrangements

Catholic Ladies' College has developed a set of guidelines to ensure the implementation of the minimum child safety standards in accordance with the Ministerial Order 870. The Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing is the Child Safety Lead and will review this policy annually.

Expectation re Child Safe Code of Conduct

At Catholic Ladies' College, 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. All staff and volunteers will be familiar with and regularly reminded of the important role all play in the protection of young people. They will be expected to uphold the College's Child Safe Code of Conduct. Our Code also protects school staff through clarification of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

Student Safety and Participation

At Catholic Ladies' College, we actively encourage all students to openly express their views and feel comfortable about giving voice to the things that are important to them. We teach students about what they can do if they feel unsafe and enable them to understand, identify, discuss and report on child safety. We listen to and act on any concerns students, or their parents or carers, raise with us.

Child Safety Officers

Catholic Ladies' College has appointed the people listed below as the College's Child Safety Officers. Each Child Safety Officer is available to answer any questions that an individual may have with respect to our Child Safe Policy and the Child Protection Program. The College's Child Safety Officers can be that first point of contact for reporting child protection issues within the College. They receive special training that allows them to deal with child protection concerns both sensitively and effectively.

- Mrs Stephanie Evans, Principal
- Mrs Debbie Brock, Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing
- Miss Nikki Cameron, Student Counsellor
- Miss Samantha Povey, Student Counsellor
- Mrs Ann Fahey, Learning Enhancement Leader

7. Reporting and Responding

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

Our College's **Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Allegations of Child Abuse** 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 school records any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Child Safe Code of Conduct, and stores the records in accordance with security and privacy requirements.

Our College has also established internal processes to ensure that appropriate action is taken to respond to concerns about the wellbeing and/or safety of a student. Our complaints and disclosure processes are outlined and detailed in the following College policies:

- Complaints Resolution
- Privacy

8. Screening and Recruitment of School Staff

Catholic Ladies' College 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 Safe Code of Conduct and the Child Safe Policy.

When recruiting and selecting employees, contractors and volunteers involved in child-connected work, we make all reasonable efforts to:

- confirm the applicant's Working with Children Check and National Police Check status and/or professional registration (as relevant)
- obtain proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications
- verify the applicant's history of work involving children
- obtain references that address the applicant's suitability for the job and working with children.

We have 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.

9. Child Safety – Education and Training for School Staff

Catholic Ladies' College provides employees, volunteers and clergy with regular and appropriate opportunities to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters. This includes induction, ongoing training and professional learning to ensure that everyone understands their professional and legal obligations and responsibilities, and the procedures for reporting suspicion of child abuse and neglect.

As part of Catholic Ladies' College induction process, all staff and Direct Contact Volunteers and Board Directors are required to complete a selection of training modules on the content of our Child Protection Program. All staff, Direct Contact Volunteers and College Board directors are provided with additional, ongoing child protection training at least annually.

Staff, volunteers (direct and indirect), third party contractors and external education providers are supported and supervised to ensure that they are compliant with the College's approach to child protection.

10. Risk Management

At Catholic Ladies' College we are committed to proactively and systematically identifying and assessing risks to student safety across our whole school environment, and reducing or eliminating (where possible) all potential sources of harm. 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.

It is the responsibility of the College Executive Team and College Board directors to regularly review our Child Protection Program to ensure that it is working in practice and that the College is meeting its legal and regulatory obligations relating to child protection. We undertake this practice through tasks linked to risks in CompliSpace Assurance software.

11. Relevant Legislation

- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.)
- *Worker Screening Act 2020* (Vic.)
- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic.)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic.)
- *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth)
- *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.) – Three new criminal offences have been introduced under this Act:
 - 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.



- i) **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.

12. Related Policies

12.1 Catholic Education Melbourne Policies

- [CECV Guidelines Relating to the Employment of Staff](#)
- [Policy 2.19: Child Protection – Reporting Obligations](#)
- [Policy 2.20: Complaints Policy](#)
- [Policy 2.26: Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools](#)
- [CECV Positive Behaviour Guidelines](#)

12.2 School Policies

- Child Protection – Reporting Obligations
- Child Protection – Staff Training
- Student Duty of Care Policies
- Occupational Health and Safety Policies
- Grievance and Complaints Procedures
- Recruitment, Selection and Induction Procedures

13. Breach of Policy

Where an employee is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this Policy, Catholic Ladies' College may start the process under clause 13 of the Victorian Catholic Education Multi Enterprise Agreement 2018 (VCEMEA) for managing employment concerns. This may result in disciplinary consequences.

Where the Principal is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the concerned party is advised to contact the Chair of the College Board. Relevant notification should also be made to Catholic Education Melbourne (Office of Professional Conduct, Ethics and Investigation).

Where any other member of the school community is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the school is to take appropriate action, including in accordance with policies.

14. Review of this Child Safe Policy

At Catholic Ladies' College we are committed to continuous improvement of our child safety systems and practices. We intend this policy to be a dynamic document that will be regularly reviewed to ensure it is working in practice and updated to accommodate changes in legislation or circumstance. We will maintain a history of updates to the policy.

15. References

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) 2016, [Commitment Statement to Child Safety: A safe and nurturing culture for all children and young people in Catholic schools](#).

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV), [VCEMEA](#) 2018 CECV.

Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, [The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium](#), Vatican.

Department of Education, 2016, [PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#)

State of Victoria 2016, [Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools: Ministerial Order No. 870](#), Education & Training Reform Act 2006, Victorian Government Gazette No. S2.

Parliament of Victoria, Family and Community Development Committee, 2013, [Betrayal of Trust](#)