

Catholic Ladies' College



Child Safety and Wellbeing



Catholic Ladies' College Ltd

(ACN 058 164 891) (ABN 44 058 164 891)

CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING

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

In responding to this call, the College is a Christ-centred community established to educate, in partnership with parents, women of faith, integrity, individuality and compassion, confident of their own worth as women and wholly involved in the transformation of society.

Context

The College recognises the importance of applying additional measures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all vulnerable children and young people under its care. This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (the Policy) is structured and guided by *Ministerial Order 1359 Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools (Ministerial Order 1359)* and the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

Purpose

This Policy sets out the College's commitment, strategies, practices and expectations to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people at the College and to enable the staff to effectively manage the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people under their care.

Scope/Intended Audience

This Policy applies to all College Staff (collectively includes College Board, Principal, employees, including contractors, pre-service teachers and volunteers)

Statement of Commitment

The College has zero tolerance for any form of child abuse and is deeply committed to upholding and embedding the highest standards of child safety. We are guided by our Catholic faith and the unique and unrepeatable dignity of every person in our care. We are dedicated to creating an inclusive and protective environment where every child can feel and be safe. We are responsible for inspiring and enabling every child to flourish and enrich the world. Child safety is a shared responsibility between the College and the wider community.

Definitions and Abbreviations

Definitions used in this Policy can be found in Appendix 1.

Guiding Principles

Guided by *Ministerial Order 1359*, the Victorian Child Safe Standards and our Catholic faith, the overarching principles supporting the management of child safety and wellbeing at the College are:

- 1) A culturally safe and inclusive environment will be established in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued, together with the inherent dignity and diversity of all children
- 2) Child safety and wellbeing will be embedded in governance, College leadership and decision-making practices
- 3) Children and young people will be empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and have a right to feel safe and be safe in the College community



- 4) The College will partner with families and members of the school community to promote child safe and wellbeing practices and be active participants in decisions that impact the safety and wellbeing of their child
- 5) Equity will be upheld and diversity is respected with emphasis on the dignity of each child and young person under our care
- 6) The College is committed to ensuring that individuals working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice
- 7) All complaints, concerns and disclosures of child abuse are taken seriously, are child focussed and will be responded to promptly and thoroughly
- 8) College staff will be equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe, through ongoing education and training
- 9) The College is committed to maintaining a safe physical and online environment for all children and young people under its care
- 10) College policies and procedures foster openness so that all persons, and in particular children and young people, may feel safe to disclose concerns or risks of harm to children and young people.

The implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed by the College.

Policy Statements

1. Child Safety and Wellbeing Framework

The College is committed to embedding a Child Safety and Wellbeing framework that is fit for purpose and provides protection to children and young people under its care. The foundation of the framework is supported by our Catholic identity and values and the Victorian Child Safe Standards. The approach to child safety and wellbeing is documented in our policies which indicate how the College has embedded child safety and wellbeing across its practices.

2. Child Safety Knowledge, Skills and Awareness

2.1 The College recognises that initial induction and ongoing training and awareness is critical for ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities to protect and empower children and young people.

2.2 Staff will participate in a range of training to reinforce their skills and knowledge to establish and maintain a child safe environment.

2.3 Staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually across the organisation. Training may include but is not limited to:

- child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and the *CLC Child Safety Code of Conduct*
- completing the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations or other recommended Framework mandated by the Victorian Catholic Education Authority (VCEA)
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by adults, children and students
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- legal obligations including PROTECT Reporting - 4 critical actions mandated by the Victorian Government
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
- identifying and mitigating child safety and wellbeing risks in the College environment.

Other learning and training on child safety and wellbeing will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and according to legislative requirements.

3. School Child Safety and Wellbeing Policies

This Policy, and all public policies for child safety and wellbeing, are published on the College website.

4. Reportable Conduct



The College is committed to ensuring all staff understand their obligations to report child safety incidents and concerns. The College will:

- educate staff on the Reportable Conduct Scheme during the induction process and through ongoing training
- immediately act to ensure the child's safety and wellbeing and report the matter to a Child Safety Officer or Principal and relevant authorities
- provide clear guidelines on the reporting process and ensure it is accessible to all staff.

The Principal will ensure that any allegations of Reportable Conduct involving staff are addressed appropriately by:

- reporting any allegations of reportable conduct to the Social Services Regulator (SSR) within three business days
- conducting thorough investigations and take appropriate actions based on the findings.

5. Continual improvement and review

The College is committed to regularly reviewing its approach to child safety and wellbeing including a review of this Policy, compliance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards, *Ministerial Order 1359* and its overarching approach to managing child safety and wellbeing risk.

6. Legislative requirements

This Policy and supporting documents are guided by legislative and regulatory requirements.

7. Recordkeeping

7.1 Child Safety and Wellbeing policies and records will be kept in line with *Ministerial Order 1359* and the *CLC Records Management Policy and CLC Child Safety Recordkeeping Procedures*. Staff will receive appropriate training about the collection, use, storage and disposal of child safety and wellbeing records

7.2 Where there is any inconsistency between *Ministerial Order 1359* and College policies, *Ministerial Order 1359* will prevail

7.3 All child safety and wellbeing records will be kept in a secure manner in accordance with College policies and the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) Recordkeeping Standards.

Related Documents and Legislation

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005

(Vic) Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) – including three criminal offences 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.

PROTECT – 4 critical actions <https://www.vic.gov.au/protect-schools>

Child Safety and Wellbeing 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)

Public Records Act 1973 (Vic)

Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)

Ministerial Order 1359: Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises

CLC Policies

CLC Child Safety Code of Conduct

CLC Child Safety Recordkeeping Procedures

CLC Records Management Policy

CLC Reportable Conduct Policy

CLC Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy

Review Schedule

Stage	Date	Ratified	Ratified by
Initiated		September 2010	
Review 1	October 2015		
Review 2	October 2016		
Review 3	January 2018		
Review 4	August 2018	August 2018	
Review 5	July 2026	August 2026	Board



Appendix 1: Definitions and Abbreviations

Board Director - means a voting member of the College Board

Child - A child or young person who is under the age of 18 years or according to relevant and applicable legislation

Child abuse includes:

- (a) any act committed against a Child involving:
 - (i) a sexual offence
 - (ii) an offence under section 49B (2) of the *Crimes Act 1958* (grooming)
- (b) the infliction, on a Child, of:
 - (i) physical violence
 - (ii) serious emotional or psychological harm
- (c) serious neglect of a Child.

Child safety - includes 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 suspicions, incidents, disclosures or allegations of child abuse ([Ministerial Order No. 1359](#)).

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 – mandatory reporting: 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](#)

Reasonable belief – reportable conduct scheme: When a person has a reasonable belief that a worker/volunteer has committed reportable conduct or misconduct that may involve reportable



conduct. A reasonable belief is more than suspicion and there must be some objective basis for the belief. It does not necessitate proof or require certainty.

NOTE: the difference between the reasonable belief definitions under mandatory reporting and the reportable conduct scheme is the category of persons who are required to, or can, form the reasonable belief which forms the basis for a report.

Reportable conduct

Reportable conduct for the purposes of the Reportable Conduct Scheme is:

- a sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child, whether or not a criminal proceeding in relation to the offence has been commenced or concluded
- sexual misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence of, a child
- physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- significant neglect of a child as defined in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic).

(Refer Commission for Children and Young People CCYP <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme/>)

School/College environment means any of the following physical, online or virtual places used during or outside school/service hours:

- a campus of the school
- online or virtual school environments made available or authorised by the College for use by a child or student (including email, intranet systems, software, applications, collaboration tools and online services)

other locations provided by the College or through a third-party provider for a child or student to use (including, but not limited to, locations used for school camps, approved homestay accommodation, delivery by education and training providers)

Child Safety and Wellbeing records - are any records that involve or relate to matters concerning child safety or which involves or relates to matters involving the safety or wellbeing of a child, which may include records relating to:

- concerns or complaints relating to child safety or the safety or wellbeing of a child
- safety incidents involving a child
- Mandatory Reporting
- reportable allegations
- Reportable Conduct
- other matters relating to the safety or wellbeing of a child.

PROV – Public Records Office Victoria

Staff -an individual working in a school environment who is:

- directly engaged or employed by the school governing authority
- a contracted service provider engaged by the College to perform child-related work for the College
- a minister of religion, a religious leader or an employee or officer of a religious body associated with the College (*Ministerial Order No. 1359*).

Student - means an individual enrolled at the College, including individuals over the age of 18 years.

Volunteer - a person who performs work without remuneration or reward for the College in the school environment.