

CHILD PROTECTION

POLICY NAME: Child Protection and Safety

ADOPTED: July 2016

LAST AMENDED: July 2016



Child Protection and Safety Policy

At Killester 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).

Killester College has developed the following Child Protection and Safety Policy. This policy is an overarching document that provides key elements of our approach to protecting children from abuse. It is designed to be communicated through our public website as well as through other mediums such as newsletters, our annual report and in induction and welcome packs for Stewardship Council members, staff and volunteers.

Our Child Protection and Safety Policy

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Child abuse includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect and a child's exposure to family violence. Killester College is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse and demonstrates this commitment through the implementation of a comprehensive Child Protection Program designed to keep children safe.

At Killester College we are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. We do not and will not tolerate child abuse. The College regards its child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and to maintain a child safe culture.

Child Safe 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 approach to Child Safety:

1. All children have a fundamental right to be safe and protected from all forms of abuse and neglect.
2. The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
3. The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.
4. All staff and volunteers 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
5. Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
6. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.
7. All persons involved in situations where harm is suspected or disclosed must be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect.

In addition to the above, the following overarching principles guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse.

1. All students have the right to a thorough and systematic education in all aspects of personal safety, in partnership with their parents/guardians/caregivers.
2. The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected in the community.
3. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Safety Code of Conduct and Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy.
4. Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our College community.
5. Procedures are in place to screen all staff, Direct Contact Volunteers**third party contractors and external education providers who have direct contact with children.
6. Child protection training is mandatory for all Stewardship Council members, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers.
7. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the College community.
8. Child Safety Officers are trained and appointed to support to the implementation of this policy and related procedures.

***Direct Contact Volunteers are those volunteers that are involved in providing support, guidance and supervision directly to students and could potentially have direct unsupervised contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service.*

Examples of Direct Contact Volunteer activities may include volunteers involved in College camps and excursions, coaching sporting teams or assisting in learning activities.

Objectives

This policy provides the framework for:

- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child protection within the College;
- the creation of a positive and robust child protection culture;
- the promotion and open discussion of child protection issues within the College; and
- complying with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection in Victoria.

Child Protection Program

Killester College is committed to the effective implementation of our Child Protection Program and ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated. We adopt a risk management approach by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety risks based on a range of factors including the nature of our College's activities, physical and online environments and the characteristics of the student body.

Our Child Protection Program relates to all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse. It includes:

- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and associated key risk indicators;
- clear procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse;
- strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, volunteers (direct and indirect), third party contractors, external education providers, parents and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child protection matters;
- procedures for recruiting and screening Board and Stewardship Council members, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers;
- pastoral care strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe;
- policies with respect to cultural diversity and students with disabilities;
- a child protection training program;
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children;
- guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality;
- policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Victorian Child Safe Standards); and
- a system for continuous improvement and review.

As a part of Killester College's induction process, all staff and Direct Contact Volunteers are required to complete a selection of training modules on the content of our Child Protection Program.

All staff, Direct Contact Volunteers and Stewardship Council members 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 by a Child Safety Officer, the Business Manager or a member of the leadership team to ensure that they are compliant with the College's approach to child protection.

Responsibilities

Child protection is everyone's responsibility. At Killester College all members of the Stewardship Council and staff, as well as direct and indirect volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. Specific responsibilities include:

Board

Each member of the Board is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the College's Child Protection and Safety Policy and the Child Protection Program to be effectively implemented within the College and are responsible for holding the Principal and the leadership team accountable for effective implementation.

The Principal

The Principal is responsible, and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Protection and Safety Policy and the College's Child Protection Program are implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child protection culture is maintained within the College.

The College's Child Safety Officers

A number of staff members are nominated as College's Child Safety Officers. Our Child Safety Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child protection issues. They are the first point of contact for raising child protection concerns within the College. They are also responsible for championing child protection within the College and assisting in coordinating responses to child protection incidents.

Staff Members

All staff are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the College's Child Safety Officers.

Direct Contact Volunteers

All Direct Contact Volunteers, as defined in this policy, are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Safety Code of Conduct and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the College's Child Safety Officers.

Indirect Contact Volunteers

Indirect Contact Volunteers (or 'indirect volunteers') are those volunteers who are involved in providing support and services whilst not directly assisting a specific group of students. Indirect contact volunteers are not responsible for supervising students and would not have "unsupervised" contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service.

All indirect volunteers are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

All indirect volunteers are required by the College to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program.

Examples of Indirect Contact Volunteer activities may include assisting with College functions, or the College canteen and fundraising barbeques.

Third Party Contractors

All Third Party Contractors (service providers) engaged by the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

All service providers engaged by the College are required by the College to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program.

The College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the service provider.

External Education Providers

An external education provider is any organisation that the College has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the College.

The delivery of such a course may take place on College premises or elsewhere.

All external education providers engaged by the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

All external education providers engaged by the College are required by the College to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program.

Killester College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the external education provider.

Reporting Concerns

Our Child Protection Program provides detailed guidance for staff, members of the Stewardship Council and Direct Contact Volunteers as to how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to one of our Killester College's nominated Child Safety Officers. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.

Third party contractors, external education providers, indirect contact volunteers, students, parents/carers or other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse are asked to contact one of the College's Child Safety Officers.

Communications will be treated confidentially on a "need to know basis".

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.

Definitions

Child Abuse

Child abuse is defined in section 3 of the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) as including:

- any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or a grooming offence listed in the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic);
- the infliction of physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- the serious neglect of a child.

A child is defined by the Act as a person who is under the age of 18 years.

Family Violence

Whilst the term "family violence" does not form part of the official definition of "child abuse", the impact of family violence on a child is commonly referred to as a form of child abuse.

In Victoria section 5 of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic) defines "family violence" as behaviour by a person towards a family member that is:

- physically or sexually abusive;
- emotionally or psychologically abusive;
- economically abusive;
- threatening;

- coercive; or
- in any other way controlling or dominating the family member and causes them to feel fear for their own, or other family member's safety or wellbeing.

Behaviour that causes a child to hear, witness or be exposed to the effects of such behaviour also falls within the definition of "family violence".

Sexual Offences

A sexual offence occurs when a person involves a child in sexual activity, or deliberately puts the child in the presence of sexual behaviours that are exploitative or inappropriate to the child's age and development. Children may be bribed or threatened physically and psychologically to make them participate in the activity.

Sexual abuse can involve a wide range of sexual activity and may include fondling, masturbation, oral sex, penetration, voyeurism and exhibitionism. It can also include exploitation through pornography or prostitution as well as **grooming behaviour**.

Grooming

Grooming refers to predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time. It is a sexual offence under section 49B of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) carrying a maximum 10 year term of imprisonment.

Grooming behaviour typically involves a graduation from attention giving and non-sexual touching to increasingly more intimate and intrusive behaviour.

Grooming does not necessarily involve any sexual activity or even discussion of sexual activity. For example, it may only involve establishing a relationship with a child, a parent or carer for the purpose of facilitating sexual activity at a later time.

Certain behaviours or acts will not in isolation constitute grooming behaviour. However, where there is a repeating pattern of indicative behaviour, or several incidents of indicative behaviour, it may constitute grooming behaviour.

Physical Violence

Physical violence occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from a non-accidental injury or injuries inflicted by another person. Physical violence can be inflicted in many ways including beating, shaking, burning or using weapons (such as belts and paddles).

Physical abuse does not mean reasonable discipline, though it may result from excessive or inappropriate discipline.

Serious Emotional or Psychological Harm

Serious emotional or psychological abuse may occur when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats or the witnessing of family violence. It also includes hostility, derogatory name-calling and put-downs, or persistent coldness from a person, to the extent where the behaviour of the child is disturbed or their emotional development is at serious risk of being impaired. Serious emotional or psychological harm could also result from conduct that exploits a child without necessarily being criminal, such as encouraging a child to engage in inappropriate or risky behaviours.

Psychological or emotional abuse may occur with or without other forms of abuse.

Serious Neglect

Serious neglect is the continued failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention or adequate supervision, to the extent that the child's health, safety and/or development is, or is likely to be, jeopardised. Serious neglect can also occur if an adult fails to adequately ensure the safety of a child where the child is exposed to extremely dangerous or life threatening situations.

Family Violence

In Victoria "family violence" is a defined term under the Family Violence Protection Act 2008. It is a criminal offence.

When dealing with children it is important to remember that "family violence" extends to behaviour that causes a child to hear, witness, or be exposed to the effects of "family violence".

As family violence can result in one or more forms of child abuse (being sexual offences, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm or serious neglect) the physical and behavioural indicators of these types of abuse may also be indicative of a family violence situation.

Related Policies and Procedures

School Programs

- Risk Management Program
- Compliance Program
- Human Resources Program
- Student Care Program
- Occupational Health & Safety Program
- Child Protection Staff Training
- Recruitment & Selection Procedures
- Induction Procedures

Catholic Education Melbourne Policies

- Policy 2.2: Guidelines Relating to the Employment of Staff (currently under review)
- Policy 2.19: Child Protection – Reporting Obligations
- Policy 2.19a: School Guidelines –Police and DHHS Interview Protocols
- Policy 2.26: Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools (currently under review)

Disciplinary Procedures

Where a staff member breaches any obligation, duty or responsibility within this Program, Killester College may take disciplinary action, in accordance with the *Victorian Catholic Education Multi Enterprise Agreement 2013*(VCEMEA). In the case of serious breaches this may include summary dismissal.

Where any other member of the College community breaches any obligation, duty or responsibility within this Program, Killester College may take appropriate action.

Review of this Child Safety Policy

Killester College is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Protection Program. The Program is regularly reviewed for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child protection related laws, regulations and standards.

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) 2013, *Victorian Catholic Education Multi Enterprise Agreement 2013*, CECV.

Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, Vatican.

Safe Schools Hub 2014, *National Safe Schools Framework Glossary*, Australian Government Department of Education and Training.

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.

Victorian Government Department of Justice 2016, *Betrayal of Trust Implementation*