



CHILD SAFE POLICY

Preamble

St Columba's College is a Mary Aikenhead Ministries College 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 Venerable Mary Aikenhead and the spirituality of the Sisters of Charity, and the Mary Aikenhead Ministries' mission and vision, and values of justice, love, compassion and hope.

St Columba's College has developed the following Child Safe Policy.

At St Columba's College we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of students as a central and fundamental responsibility of our College. 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.

"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).

This Policy is an overarching document that provides key elements of our approach to protecting children from abuse. It outlines St Columba's College's commitments and procedures for keeping students safe from harm, including all forms of abuse in our school environment, on campus, online, and in other locations where College activities occur.

The Policy forms the foundation of the College's procedures, practices, decision-making processes and ultimately the College's culture with respect to child safety.

It is designed to be published on our public website as well as communicated through other mediums such as newsletters, our annual report and in induction and welcome packs for College Board members, staff and Volunteers.

The College's Child Safe Policy has been approved and endorsed by the College's College Board and is regularly reviewed by the Board.

Our Child Safe Policy

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
- compliance with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection in Victoria.

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

St Columba's College is committed to providing a child safe and child friendly environment, where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and are able to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.

At St Columba's 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.

Child Safe Values and Principles

The College's commitment to child safety is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse.

1. All children have the right to be safe.
2. The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
3. The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected.
4. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Safe Code of Conduct and Staff and Student Professional Boundaries policy.
5. The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.
6. Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our College community.
7. Procedures are in place to screen all staff, Direct Contact Volunteers**, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers who have direct contact with children.
8. Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
9. Child protection training is mandatory for all College Board directors, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers.
10. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the College community.
11. 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.
12. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

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

The Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic) defines "direct contact" as any contact between a person and a child (aged under 18) that involves:

- *physical contact;*
- *face to face contact;*
- *contact by post or other written communication;*
- *contact by telephone or other oral communication; or*
- *contact by email or other electronic communication.*

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

Child Protection Program

St Columba's 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 Safety Risk Register is overseen by the College Board and is reviewed annually.

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, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, parents/carers and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child protection matters
- procedures for recruiting and screening College Board directors, staff, Direct Contact Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers
- procedures for reporting reportable conduct and/or misconduct
- 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)
- a system for continuous review and improvement.

As a part of St Columba's 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.

Additional, ongoing child protection training is provided at least annually.

Staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers are supported and supervised by the College's Child Protection Officers to ensure that they are compliant with the College's approach to child protection.

Responsibilities

Child protection is everyone's responsibility. At St Columba's College, the College Board and staff, as well as Volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. Specific responsibilities include:

College Board

Each director of the College Board is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the College's Child Safe Policy and the Child Protection Program to be effectively implemented within the College and are responsible for holding the Principal and 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 Safe 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 Protection Officers

A number of staff members have been nominated as the College's Child Protection Officers.

Brigitte McDonald - Deputy Principal as the Senior Child Protection Officer.

Nakkita Egan - Head of Students as the second Child Protection Officer.

Olivia Chitima - College Counsellor as the third Child Protection Officer.

Our Child Protection 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 Safe 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 Protection Officers.

Students

Students are all responsible for contributing to a safe and respectful environment at St Columba's College. Where a reasonable belief is formed regarding student sexual offending the College will follow the Protect Protocol - Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending.

Direct Contact Volunteers

All Direct Contact Volunteers, as defined in this policy, are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection Program, particularly this Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe 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 Protection Officers.

Indirect Contact Volunteers

Indirect Contact Volunteers are those volunteers who are involved in providing support and services whilst not directly assisting a specific group of students.

All Indirect Contact Volunteers are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

All Indirect Contact Volunteers are required by the College to be familiar with our Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct.

Examples of Indirect Contact Volunteer activities may include assisting with College administrative functions.

Third Party Contractors

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

Third Party Contractors include, for example, maintenance and building personnel, consultants, casual teachers, tutors, sports coaches and College cleaners.

This also includes music teachers and other extra-curricular teachers and instructors who are engaged by students and their families directly, rather than the College, but have an agreement with the College to use the College's facilities.

All Third Party Contractors engaged by the College are required by the College to be familiar with our Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct.

The College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the Third Party Contractor.

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 Safe Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct.

St Columba's College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the External Education Provider.

Reporting Child Abuse Concerns

Our Child Protection Program provides detailed guidance for the College Board, staff 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 College's nominated Child Protection Officers. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.

Staff, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, Volunteers, students, parents/carers and other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse or grooming are asked to contact the College's Senior Child Protection Officer, Brigitte McDonald, by phoning 03 9331 9489 or emailing mcdonaldb@columba.vic.edu.au.

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.

Policy and Program Review

St Columba's 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.

Related Procedures

St Columba's College – *Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Allegations of Child Abuse*

APPROVAL AND REVIEW

Date of Approval:	August 2019
Approval Authority:	St Columba's College Board
Delegated Contact Person:	College Principal
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