



# CHILD SAFE POLICY

## Introduction

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.

## Purpose and Objectives

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 to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.

The St Columba's College Board Ltd has approved this Child Safe Policy in July 2023. It will be reviewed in July 2024.

Our Child Safe Policy demonstrates the College's strong commitment to child safety and wellbeing and to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly environment. It provides an overview of the policies and practices that we have developed to keep our students safe, including from abuse or other harm.

Our Child Safe Policy outlines the key elements of our approach to implementing Ministerial Order 1359 (which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments) and to the College as a child safe organisation. It informs the College community about everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards students and guides the policies, processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work, which are set out in the College's Child Safety Program. (1)

St Columba's College's Child Safe Policy is to be read and understood in conjunction with the [Victorian Child Safe Standards, Ministerial Order 1359](#), the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) (National Principles) and the [National Catholic Safeguarding Standards](#) (NCSS).

The Child Safe Policy provides the framework for:

- the implementation of the Victorian Child Safe Standards, Ministerial Order No 1359 and the National Principles
- the implementation of the St Columba's College Child Safeguarding Program
- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures, consistent with [PROTECT Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosure and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#) (PROTECT Four Critical Actions) and [PROTECT Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#) (Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending), that promote child protection, safety and wellbeing within the College
- the creation of a safe and supportive College environment and a positive and robust child safe culture
- the promotion and open discussion of child safety issues within the College

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

## Scope

The College's Child Safe Policy applies to all adults in the College community, whether or not their work involves direct contact with students, including:

- Staff and Direct Contact Contractors (including External Education Providers) who are "school staff" within the meaning of Ministerial Order 1359
- other types of Contractors
- Volunteers
- Visitors.

This Policy applies in all physical, virtual and online College environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including all locations provided for a student's use (for example, on-site and off-site College grounds, sporting events, camps, excursions and environments provided by External Education Providers and other Contractors).

## Definitions

Definitions of the following terms used in the Child Safe Policy can be found in [Child Safety Program Definitions](#) (or a hard copy can be provided to you):

- child
- child abuse and other harm
- child safety and wellbeing
- child safety incident or concern
- child-connected work
- child-related work
- contractor
- school environment
- school staff
- school governing authority
- student
- visitor
- volunteer.

## Responsibilities

Child safety and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility. All adults in the College community have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety, wellbeing and protection of students.

St Columba's College is a child safe environment. Our College actively promotes the safety and wellbeing of all students and all College staff are committed to protecting students from abuse and harm.

Specific responsibilities are summarised at the end of this Policy.

## Source of Obligation

### Child Safety Standards

In addition to implementing the Victorian Child Safe Standards, the College's commitment to child safety is based on the National Principles and the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS).

Requiring compliance with these additional Standards is one of the strategies employed by the St Columba's College Board Ltd to embed a culture of child safety at the College.

St Columba's College has also developed specific child safe principles and values relevant to its own specific circumstances that guide our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect students from abuse and harm.

### **The Victorian Child Safe Standards**

The Victorian Child Safe Standards were originally developed in response to the Victorian Parliament's Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations. They were replaced by a set of new Standards in 2022, to reflect the National Principles and to support greater national consistency. There are 11 Victorian Child Safe Standards. They are:

1. Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.
2. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
3. Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
4. Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
5. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
6. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
7. Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.
8. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
9. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
10. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
11. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

### **The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations**

The National Principles were developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission in response to recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The National Principles are comprised of 10 Principles that were informed by, but go further than, the 10 Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission. They are:

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
5. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
6. Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.
7. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
8. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
9. Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

## **The National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS)**

The National Catholic Safeguarding Standards expand on the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, specifically for Catholic settings. They set out 10 overarching standards that guide the development of a child safe culture for Catholic entities. Compliance with the NCSS is mandatory for all Catholic entities.

The NCSS are:

- Standard 1: Committed leadership, governance and culture
- Standard 2: Children are safe, informed and participate
- Standard 3: Partnering with families, carers and communities
- Standard 4: Equity is promoted and diversity is respected
- Standard 5: Robust human resource management
- Standard 6: Effective complaints management
- Standard 7: Ongoing education and training
- Standard 8: Safe physical and online environments
- Standard 10: Policies and procedures support child safety

## **St Columba's College's Child Safety Principles and Values**

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 interest 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 members, 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, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and other children who are vulnerable (such as children in out of home care or children of diverse sexuality) have the right to special care and support.
12. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

## **Policy**

### **Child Safety Codes of Conduct**

Our Child Safety Codes of Conduct include a Child Safe Code of Conduct and a Staff and Student Professional Boundaries policy. Together, these Codes of Conduct set boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults in our College community and students, including in physical, online and virtual environments.

We also have a Student Child Safety Code of Conduct, which includes standards of behaviour for students relevant to child safety and wellbeing.

Our Child Safety Codes of Conduct include clear processes to report inappropriate behaviour. We publish our Child Safety Codes of Conduct on our public website so that everyone can easily find

out what behaviours are acceptable and unacceptable at our College and how to report inappropriate behaviour.

We also provide additional information to students and families about the Child Safety Codes of Conduct, to ensure that they know what behaviours are acceptable and unacceptable and how to report inappropriate behaviour.

## Cultural Safety

At St Columba's College, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe College where the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, we recognise the link between culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, their families and their communities (including local Aboriginal communities relevant to the College) to have a voice and presence in our College's planning, policies, and activities.

The specific strategies that we have adopted to promote cultural safety in our College are based on and adhere to Standard 1 of the Child Safe Standards. St Columba's students have created a student friendly version of the [Child Safe Standards](#).

St Columba's College values and respects the cultural diversity of our students and is committed to ensuring that the backgrounds of all students are sensitively recognised, catered for, celebrated and valued so that cultural differences do not compromise students' safety and wellbeing.

St Columba's College identifies, confronts and does not tolerate racism, and any instances of racism within the College environment are addressed with appropriate consequences.

## Student Empowerment and Participation

St Columba's College is a child safe and child-centred organisation, and we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We ensure that our physical, virtual and online environments are friendly and welcoming to all children and young people.

We actively seek to include students in decisions that affect them. This includes decisions about organisational planning, delivery of services, management of facilities, and learning and assessment environments.

We ensure that students know about their rights to safety, information and participation. We actively seek to understand what makes students feel safe in our College and regularly communicate with students about what they can do if they feel unsafe.

We recognise the importance of friendships and encourage respectful relationships, strong friendships and support from peers.

The specific strategies that we have adopted to promote the participation of and empowerment of students, and to implement all of the above obligations, are set out in the Participation and Empowerment of Students section of our Child Safety Program.

## Parent/Carer, Family and Community Engagement

The College recognises that parents and carers have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their children. We ensure they participate in decisions affecting their children.

We ensure that families and relevant communities (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, other communities that make up our Staff and student cohort, and the local community in which our College operates) know about the College's operations and policies, including its Child Safe Policy and the Child Safety Codes of Conduct, record keeping practices, risk management, and complaints and investigation processes.

We actively seek to include families and relevant communities in decisions about organisational planning, delivery of services, management of facilities, and learning and assessment environments.

We build cultural safety at the College through partnerships with relevant communities.

The specific strategies that we have adopted to promote the engagement of parents/carers, families, and relevant communities in child safety and wellbeing at the College, to make information about child safety and wellbeing available and accessible, and to implement all of the above obligations, are set out in the Family and Community Involvement section in the Child Safety policy in our Child Safety Program.

## Diversity and Equity

Our College values diversity and does not tolerate any discriminatory practices. To achieve this, we:

- support the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families
- support the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families
- support students with a disability and their families and act to promote their participation
- support students and families of diverse sexuality and act to promote their participation
- seek to recruit a workforce that reflects a diversity of cultures, abilities and identities
- ensure that all Staff, Direct Contact Volunteers and Direct Contact Contractors have training about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, disability, culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and those with particular experiences or needs
- have a physical environment that actively celebrates diverse cultures and recognises cultural difference
- commit to promoting the inclusion of students of differing abilities.

The specific strategies that we have adopted to promote equity and respect diversity at the College are set out in the Family and Community Involvement, Cultural Safety and Equity/Diversity section of our Child Safety Program.

## Suitable Staff, Volunteers and Contractors and Child Safety Knowledge, Skills and Awareness (Child Safety Human Resources Management)

The specific human resources management strategies that we have adopted at the College to promote child safety and wellbeing are set out in the Child Safety Human Resources Management section of our Child Safety Program. They include the following:

## Recruitment and Screening

St Columba's College applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of Staff, Volunteers and Contractors to engage the most suitable and appropriate people to work with our students. Our practices include:

- requiring all Staff and relevant Volunteers and Contractors to maintain a valid VIT Registration or WWC (working with children) clearance, and sighting, verifying and recording this information
- ensuring that all Staff and relevant Volunteers and Contractors undergo child safety induction, and ongoing education and training
- ensuring that we provide Staff, and relevant Volunteers and Contractors who engage with students, with regular supervision and performance monitoring by their relevant Manager or a senior member of Staff
- ensuring that professional development programs for Staff include child safety education and training programs.

## Training on and Information About Child Safety

As a part of St Columba's College's induction process, all Staff as well as relevant Volunteers and Contractors are required to complete induction training on our child safety policies, practices and procedures.

All Staff, as well as relevant Volunteers and Contractors also receive refresher and ongoing child safety training at least annually.

Our child safety induction and ongoing training program includes information about:

- this Child Safe Policy
- the Child Safety Codes of Conduct
- recognising child abuse and other harm and identifying key indicators
- our policies and procedures for responding to and reporting child safety incidents or concerns (including mandatory reporting, reporting to police and reportable conduct obligations)
- our policies and procedures for information sharing and record keeping about child safety incidents and concerns
- WWC clearances and other child safety and wellbeing human resources practices.

The College provides all Visitors to the College, including Casual Volunteers and Contractors, with information about the Child Safe Codes of Conduct and how to report child safety incidents or concerns to the College and to relevant external authorities.

## Supervision and Support

The College provides Staff, Direct Contact and Regular Volunteers, and Direct Contact and Regular Contractors with support and regular supervision by their relevant Manager, the College's Child Protection Officers and/or the Leadership Team to ensure that they are compliant with the College's approach to child safety and wellbeing.

## Complaints and Reporting Processes: The College's Response to Child Safety Incidents or Concerns

St Columba's College fosters a culture that encourages everyone in the College community to raise concerns and complaints about child safety and wellbeing. Our processes for raising complaints and concerns, and the procedures that all Staff, Volunteers and Contractors must follow whenever they witness, suspect or receive a complaint about a child safety incident or concern involving a student, a staff member, a Volunteer, a Contractor or the College, are set out in the **Procedures** section, below.



The College will take appropriate, prompt action in response to all child safety incidents or concerns, including all complaints, allegations or disclosures of abuse or other harm, when Staff, Volunteers, Contractors, students, parents/carers or anyone else reports these to the College.

The College's response will include:

- externally reporting all matters that meet the required relevant thresholds to Child Protection (Mandatory Reports), the Police (Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse), the CCYP (Reportable Conduct), and/or the Victorian Institute of Teaching (Teacher Misconduct), depending on the issues raised and consistent with [PROTECT Four Critical Actions](#) and [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#)
- fully cooperating with any resulting investigation by an external agency
- protecting any student connected to the child safety incident or concern until it is resolved and providing ongoing support to those affected
- taking particular measures in response to child safety incidents or concerns about an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student, a student from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, a student with disability, and other vulnerable students (such as students who are unable to live at home or students who identify as lesbian gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex)
- sharing information with, or requesting information from, external people or agencies as permitted or required under the Child Information Sharing Scheme and/or the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme
- securing and retaining records of the child safety incident or concern and the College's response to it
- taking broader actions to improve child safety at the College (including systemic reviews and resulting improvements).

### Child Safety Risk Management

St Columba's College Board directors and staff members recognise the importance of a risk management approach to minimising the potential for child abuse or harm to occur and we use this information to inform our policies, procedures and activity planning.

We have implemented a comprehensive Risk Management Program to assist in the identification, assessment and management of child safety risks in all College environments.

We identify, assess and manage child safety risks in all College environments, based on a range of factors including the nature of our College's activities, its physical, virtual and online environments and the characteristics of the student body. We use this information to inform our policies, procedures and activity planning.

We record identified risks to child safety and wellbeing in our Child Protection Risk Register, along with the actions in place at the College to manage these risks. The St Columba's College Board Ltd, the Principal and/or the Leadership Team monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these actions at least annually.

### Privacy and Information Sharing

The College collects, uses and discloses information about students and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws and other relevant laws, including laws that permit the College to disclose information about child safety and wellbeing to external people and agencies. For information about how the College collects, uses and discloses this information, refer to our Privacy Policy.



## Child Safety Record Keeping

The College is committed to best practice record keeping about child safety incidents and concerns.

The College records all internal and external reports of child safety incidents and concerns, as well as any other responses by the College using [PROTECT Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A Template for Victorian Schools](#).

When keeping records of child safety incidents or concerns, the College maintains confidentiality and privacy for students and families in accordance with federal and state privacy legislation.

## Child Safety Program and Practice Review

St Columba's College is committed to the continuous improvement of the policies and procedures making up our entire Child Safety Program and of our child safety and wellbeing practices. The Program as a whole is reviewed annually (or earlier if a significant child safety incident occurs at the College or legislation changes) for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child safety and wellbeing related laws, regulations and standards.

When undertaking these reviews, the College:

- actively seeks, actions, and incorporates feedback from students, families, the wider College community, Staff, Volunteers and Contractors
- analyses any complaints, concerns and child safety incidents that may have occurred
- communicates any learnings, adjustments or amendments to policy and practice widely throughout the College community.

## Procedures

### Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns to the College

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

***Any person, including all Staff, Volunteers, Contractors, parents/carers and students, can at any time report concerns about the wellbeing of a child aged under 17 to Child Protection by:***

- during business hours (8:45am-5:00pm, Monday to Friday), contacting the Child Protection intake service for the local government area where the child resides, listed [here](#).
- after hours, telephoning 13 12 78.

### Staff

Our Child Safety Program provides detailed guidance for Board members, Staff, Volunteers and Contractors on how to identify key indicators of child abuse and other harm and how to report child safety incidents or concerns internally at the College.

These reports can be made to a Child Protection Officer or the Principal.

Where the incident or concern involves the Principal, internal reports should instead be made to the Chair of the Board ([stcchair@columba.vic.edu.au](mailto:stcchair@columba.vic.edu.au)).

Our Child Safety Program also contains detailed guidance for Staff, Volunteers and Contractors about when and how to report child safety incidents or concerns to relevant external authorities.

We recognise that some individuals, particularly children, face additional vulnerabilities to child abuse and other harm, as well as additional barriers to disclosing child safety incidents or concerns. Our Child Safety Program provides guidance on identifying additional vulnerabilities

and barriers, and contains strategies for supporting these individuals to participate in the College community and enabling them to disclose child safety incidents or concerns to the College.

### **Students, Parents/Carers and Community Members**

The College provides **students** at the College with information about and encourages them to use multiple pathways to raise child safety incidents or concerns about or at the College. We explain these in our Child Safety Complaints Management policy, and they include informal and formal ways, an 'anonymous' way, and through external child advocacy or child safety organisations.

**Parents/carers, family members and other community members** who have child safety concerns or who suspect that a child or young person associated with the College may be subject to abuse or other harm can contact:

- the Principal, 9337 5311 or [principal@columba.vic.edu.au](mailto:principal@columba.vic.edu.au)
- the College's Senior Child Safety Officer, by phoning 03 9337 5311 or emailing [mcdonaldb@columba.vic.edu.au](mailto:mcdonaldb@columba.vic.edu.au)
- if the concern relates to the Principal, the Chair of the Board ([stcchair@columba.vic.edu.au](mailto:stcchair@columba.vic.edu.au)).

**Any person** can also contact the Principal or Senior Child Safety Officer if they have concerns regarding the College's leadership in relation to child safety.

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

### **The College's Response to and External Reporting of Child Safety Incidents or Concerns**

Our Child Safety Program sets out the procedures, consistent with [PROTECT Four Critical Actions](#) and [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#), that the College will follow for any child safety incident or concern involving a student, college staff, volunteer, contractor or visitor, or other person connected to the College or the College environment.

It also provides guidance for all staff, volunteers and contractors on their obligations to respond to and report, to relevant external authorities, child safety incidents and concerns.

These procedures and guidance are summarised in our public-facing [Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Allegations of Child Abuse](#) and public-facing Complaints Policy.

### **Support for Students, Families and Staff Following Child Safety Incident or Disclosure**

Child safety incidents or concerns can cause trauma and significantly impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children, as well as on their families. In addition to reporting and referral to the relevant authorities, the College plays a central role in addressing this trauma and has a duty of care to ensure that students feel safe and supported at College.

The College employs a range of measures to support students affected by a child safety incident or concern, depending on the particular circumstances of the matter and of the student and their family:

- Child Protection Officers will work with the student and their family to develop a Student Support Plan
- support strategies that could be considered for students and/or their families might include offering or organising referrals to internal or external support, such as the College counsellor, bi-cultural workers and/or translators, or an external support agency and/or child advocacy organisation which specialises in supporting children and young people impacted by abuse or other harm.

The College offers former students who may disclose historical child safety incidents or concerns from their time at the College similar support.

Witnessing a child safety incident or receiving a disclosure of abuse or other harm can be a distressing experience for Staff, Volunteers and Contractors involved. The College assists impacted Staff, Volunteers and Contractors to access necessary support.

### **Embedding a Culture of Child Safety: Our Child Safety Program**

Our Child Safety Program itself is one of the strategies employed by St Columba's College to embed a culture of child safety at the College.

Our Child Safety Program relates to all aspects of child safety and wellbeing and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to create and maintain a child safe environment and culture at the College. It includes:

- the Child Safety Codes of Conduct
- clear information about what is child abuse and other harm and key indicators of child abuse and other harm
- clear procedures, that are consistent with [PROTECT Four Critical Actions](#) and [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#), for responding to and reporting child safety incidents or concerns internally to a Child Protection Officer, and for responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse or other harm
- strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, volunteers, contractors, parents/carers and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters
- procedures for recruiting and screening members of the leadership team, staff, volunteers and contractors
- procedures for reporting to external agencies, that are consistent with [PROTECT Four Critical Actions](#) and [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#), including Mandatory Reporting to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (Child Protection), Reportable Conduct to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) and Reporting Child Sexual Abuse to Police
- pastoral care strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe
- strategies to support and encourage the participation and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with disability and LGBTIQ+ students
- child safety training
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse or other harm to protect, support and assist students
- 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, Ministerial Order 1359 and the National Principles)
- a system for continuous review and improvement.

## **Responsibilities**

Child safety and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility. Specific responsibilities at the College include:

### **The College's Child Protection Officers**

A number of staff members are nominated as the College's Child Protection Officers. Our Child Protection Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child safety and wellbeing, including but not limited to child protection issues. They are a point of contact for raising child safety concerns within the College. They are also responsible for championing child safety within the College and assisting in coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

Our Child Protection Officers are:

Name	Position	Contact No	Email Address
Brigitte McDonald	Deputy Principal	03 9331 9489	mcdonaldb@columba.vic.edu.au
Nakkita Egan	Head of Students	03 9331 9184	egann@columba.vic.edu.au
Kate Macpherson	Director of Students	03 9331 9130	macphersonk@columba.vic.edu.au
Rebecca Pratt	Student Counsellor	03 9331 9163	prattr@columba.vic.edu.au

### The Senior Child Safety Officer

St Columba's College has also appointed Ms Brigitte McDonald, Deputy Principal as the College's Senior Child Safety Officer.

The Senior Child Safety Officer has additional child safety responsibilities, such as being a first point of contact for all child safety concerns or queries for the wider community and coordinating the College's response to child safety incidents in consultation with the Principal, the Leadership Team and the Board.

### The St Columba's College Board Ltd

The St Columba's College Board Ltd is the College's "school governing authority" for the purposes of Ministerial Order 1359.

The St Columba's College Board Ltd is responsible for:

- championing and promoting a child safe culture within the College
- approving our Child Safety Program, including this Child Safe Policy and the Child Safety Codes of Conduct.
- ensuring that the College has appropriate resources to effectively implement the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 1359, the [National Principles](#), the [National Catholic Safeguarding Standards](#), and our Child Safety Program.

### Principal

The Head of Entity at St Columba's College is the Principal who is the CEO of St Columba's College Limited. The Head of Entity responsibilities are reflected in the responsibilities of the Principal below, and also include, for the purposes of the Reportable Conduct Scheme, making all necessary notifications within the required time frames.

The Principal is the "head" of the College for the purposes of the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

## Mary Aikenhead Education Limited (MAEL)

MAEL assigns responsibility to the College Board for the Child Safety Program.

The **College Board expects** the **College Principal** to maintain the highest standards in relation to the protection of children and young people. They ensure that reports of abuse or potential abuse of a child are received and promptly reported to relevant external authorities and **St Columba's College Ltd.**

For the purposes of the Reportable Conduct Scheme, the **Chair of the Board** has authority to undertake responsibility for reporting and investigating Reportable Allegations that involve the **Principal** under our Reportable Conduct Policies and Procedures.

## The College Board

Each member of the College Board is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the College's Child Safe Policy and 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 the operational management of the College, and the implementation of the Child Safety Program. The Principal is responsible for:

- taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Safe Policy and the College's Child Safety Program are implemented effectively and followed
- ensuring that a strong and sustainable child safe culture is maintained within the College, including by:
  - modelling the Child Safe Code of Conduct, and reinforcing high standards of child safe behaviours between adults and students and between students
  - facilitating the participation of students, families, Staff and other members of the College community in promoting and improving child safety and wellbeing at the College
  - promoting regular and open discussion of child safety and wellbeing issues within the College community
  - facilitating regular professional learning for Staff and relevant Volunteers and Contractors about child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and preventing and responding to child safety incidents and concerns
  - creating an environment where child safety incidents, concerns and complaints are readily raised with the College and where no one is discouraged from reporting child safety incidents or concerns to relevant external authorities.

## Staff

All Staff are "school staff" for the purposes of Ministerial Order 1359.

All Staff are required to comply with our Child Safe Policy and Child Safety Codes of Conduct, be familiar with our Child Safety Program and understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse and other harm, and WWC Checks.

It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key indicators of child abuse and other harm, to be observant, and to raise all child safety incidents and concerns with one of the College's Child Protection Officers.

To meet these obligations, all Staff must:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and ongoing training provided by the College

- always follow the College's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures in the Child Safety Program
- act in accordance with the Child Safety Codes of Conduct
- identify and raise child safety incidents and concerns in accordance with our Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns, and follow the [PROTECT Four Critical Actions](#) and [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#)
- ensure students views are taken seriously and their voices are heard when making decisions that affect them
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

## Volunteers

A volunteer is a someone who performs work for the College in a College environment without remuneration reward. Volunteers may be family members of students, or from the wider College or local community. Volunteers are not "school staff" for the purposes of Ministerial Order 1359.

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

To meet these obligations:

- all volunteers must comply with our Child Safe Policy and Child Safety Codes of Conduct
- Direct Contact Volunteers (and, if required by the College, other Volunteers such as Regular Volunteers who are engaged in "child-connected work") must:
  - participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and ongoing training provided by the College
  - be aware of key indicators of child abuse and other harm
  - understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse and other harm
  - raise all child safety concerns with one of the College's Child Protection Officers.

## Contractors

A Contractor is someone engaged by the College to perform specific tasks. Contractors are not employees of the College. However, Contractors who have direct contact with children are "school staff" for the purposes of Ministerial Order 1359.

Contractors may include maintenance and building personnel, consultants, music tutors, sports coaches, and cleaners as well as external education providers (organisations 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).

All Contractors are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of students in the College environment.

To meet these obligations:

- all Contractors must comply with our Child Safe Policy and Child Safety Codes of Conduct.
- Direct Contact Contractors (and, if required by the College, other Contractors such as Regular Contractors who are engaged in "child-connected work") must:
  - participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and ongoing training provided by the College
  - be aware of key indicators of child abuse and other harm
  - understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse and other harm
  - raise all child safety concerns with one of the College's Child Protection Officers.



The College may include these requirements in the written agreement between it and the Contractor.

## Implementation

The Child Safe Policy is published on our College's public website. It is provided to new staff, and to Direct Contact and Regular Volunteers, and Direct Contact and Regular Contractors at their induction or prior to them commencing their work at the College.

All Visitors to the College, including Casual Volunteers and Casual Contractors, are provided with information about the Child Safe Policy (including in particular the Child Safety Codes of Conduct and how to report child safety incidents or concerns to the College and to relevant external authorities).

A child-friendly version of the Child Safe Policy and our Statement of Commitment to Child Safety is provided to all students.

## Breach of this Policy and Procedures

St Columba's College enforces this Child Safe Policy and our Child Safety Codes of Conduct. In the event of any non-compliance, we will instigate a review that may result in a range of measures including (depending on the severity of the breach):

- remedial education
- counselling
- increased supervision
- the restriction of duties
- suspension
- in the case of serious breaches, termination of employment, contract or engagement.

## Source of Obligation

The Child Safe Policy is implemented, and is to be read and understood in conjunction with:

- Victorian Child Safe Standards, Standard 2
- Ministerial Order 1359, Clause 6
- the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, Principle 1
- the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, Standard 1

## Policy Review

A review of the Child Safe Policy is conducted annually or earlier if required, such as if a significant child safety incident occurs at the College or due to changes in legislation.

The St Columba's College Board Ltd is responsible for approving this Policy and for ensuring that this Policy is reviewed and updated as needed.

(1) The Child Safety Program is the name given to the full collection of policies and procedures that assist the College to be a child safe organisation and to meet the requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards, Ministerial Order 1359, the National Principles and the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards. It includes policies and procedures for:

- responding to and reporting child safety incidents and concerns
- child safe human resources management (including WWCC clearances)
- participation and empowerment of students
- informing and involving families and relevant communities in child safeguarding issues
- equity and diversity
- child safeguarding risk management strategies

- strategies for embedding a culture of child safety at the College and
- regular reviews and continuous improvement of child safety policies, procedures and practices.

## Related Policies and Procedures

- Recruitment Policy

### POLICY HISTORY AND SCHEDULE

Date of Approval:	August 2023
Approval Authority:	St Columba's College Board
Delegated Contact Person:	College Principal
Next Review Date:	August 2025

## Appendix One

### Procedures for Maintaining the Working with Children Check (WWCC) Register and Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) Registration in the College

#### 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.

#### Purpose

The Risk and Compliance Officer, in conjunction with the Human Resources Manager, must develop and maintain up-to-date electronic Working with Children Check (WWCC) and Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registers for teachers, contractors, clergy, other staff and volunteers. Those who are exempt from a WWCC are included in this register with appropriate notation.

#### Procedures for Maintaining the Register

- Online Application Form – Applicants are required to upload a copy of their WWCC or VIT card as part of their online application.
- Identification verified at interview.
- Upon appointment – new staff member is required to upload a copy of their current WWCC or VIT card within CompliSpace.
- Risk and Compliance Officer assesses the submission and marks as complete, if appropriate.
- A copy of the card is printed and held in the relevant folder.
- The electronic copy of the card is held within CompliSpace.
- Details of the card - including first and last name, card number, expiry date, staff category and comments - are added to the electronic register.
- Reminders are sent to staff one month prior to their current cards expiry date.

Recruitment, selection and appointment processes for staff and volunteers require submission of evidence and active assurance of VIT registration or a valid WWCC prior to appointment to child-related work or volunteer activities. Recruitment, selection and appointment processes must be conducted in accordance with the St Columba's College Recruitment Policy.

The VIT and Working with Children Check Victoria websites are checked at least once per term to ensure all registrations and WWCCs continue to be current. This will be undertaken by the Risk and Compliance Officer.

For all non-teaching staff, a WWCC register is established that records their details and a copy of a valid card. The Risk and Compliance Officer will check the currency of all WWCCs for non-teaching staff and alert these staff members of the need for renewal prior to the expiry of their card.

Each year, all staff are made aware of the procedures at St Columba's College for volunteers, contractors and other persons, including the need for prior approval of such work by the designated member of the College Leadership Team.