



Child Safe Standard 3

“Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.”

As Catholic educators, we have a moral, mission-driven and legal responsibility to uphold and actively promote the wellbeing and safety of every student entrusted in our care. Our commitment to the protection of students is enabled in nurturing, respectful and safe communities where the uniqueness and sacred dignity of every young person are celebrated, and they can flourish in their learning and development.

What does “student agency” mean in relation to Child Safe Standard 3?

- Student agency means **empowering students** to have a say in matters that affect them, particularly about their safety, wellbeing, and learning environment.
- It involves **actively listening** to children and young people and taking their views seriously when developing or reviewing school policies and practices.
- Staff should encourage and support students to express their ideas, concerns, or feedback in **safe and accessible** ways.
- Students are **educated** about their rights, including how to identify unsafe situations and how to seek help from trusted adults.
- Schools foster a culture of respect and inclusion, where students’ voices are represented in decision-making processes and their perspectives inform **continuous improvement** in child safety.
- Empowering student agency helps ensure that children feel **heard, respected, and confident** that adults will respond appropriately to their input.

The Impact

When children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously, they:

- Feel **confident** that their voices matter and that adults will act to protect and support them.
- Are more aware of their rights and feel **empowered** to speak up about concerns or unsafe situations.
- Develop **stronger emotional wellbeing** and a positive sense of belonging at school, because trust and open communication between staff and students is **strengthened**
- Experience **genuine** opportunities to influence policies, programs, and practices that affect them, ensuring early opportunities for prevention can be enacted.

“Be quick to listen and slow to speak”

James 1:19



What Schools Can Do

- **Create Multiple, Accessible Opportunities for Student Voice:** These can include formal structures such as student councils and leadership programs but must also provide opportunities to all students, especially the most vulnerable
- **Act on Student Feedback:** Listen deeply to what students are saying and take meaningful action. Make students aware of the response by the school so they know they have been heard and taken seriously
- **Build Staff Capacity:** Provide professional learning for staff so they fully understand the positive impact of listening to student voice. Encourage staff skill building in student participation and active listening
- **Educate Students:** Integrate child rights and personal safety education into current curriculum or program offerings. Ensure children and young people understand how they can raise concerns about safety at their school
- **Student Participation in Program and Policy Review:** Involve students directly in the review and evaluation of policies and programs designed to keep them safe.

Still have questions about Child Safe Standard 3?

Check out the frequently asked questions section on pages 3 – 4 or visit the MACS Care microsite for comprehensive guidance.

Need further assistance?

Email the Child Safety Team at MACS: childsafety@macs.vic.edu.au

Reflect and Grow: School Staff

- How does your school already listen to students? **List 3-4 examples**
- How confident are you in encouraging **student voice and agency?**
- How does your school provide students with feedback, so they know they have been listened to and **taken seriously?**
- Are there ways students can have more participation in decisions that affect them? **How would this look at your school?**



Frequently Asked Questions

Don't the adults in a school know what is best for children and young people?

- While adults have experience, training, and responsibility for making safe decisions, students' perspectives are essential to understanding what safety and wellbeing looks like and feels like for them.
- Child Safe Standard 3 recognises that children and young people are experts in their own experiences. By listening to their views, schools can identify risks or issues that adults might not see, and create environments that are genuinely safe, inclusive, and responsive to student needs.

What should I do if a student raises a concern or shares something that makes me worried about their safety?

Always take the concern seriously, no matter how small it may seem.

- Listen calmly and respectfully without judgment.
- Reassure the student that they have done the right thing by speaking up.
- Do not promise confidentiality, explain that you may need to share the concern with others to help keep them safe.
- Follow your school's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and report the concern to the Child Safety Officer or Principal as required by school procedures and legislation.

Taking immediate and appropriate action helps build trust and demonstrates that student voices lead to real protection and care.

How can I teach or reinforce students' understanding of their rights in an age-appropriate way?

- Use curriculum programs such as Respectful Relationships (see MACS Care website for additional resources)
- Embed child rights education naturally across classroom activities and discussion
- When an event has occurred at school, or in a wider context, that is a "teachable moment", reinforce messages like "Everyone has the right to feel safe" and "You can always talk to someone you trust."
- Attend professional learning, check the MACS Care website for help and suggestions, speak to colleagues
- Develop with students a class charter that illustrates rights and responsibilities.

Revisiting these ideas regularly ensures students understand that their voices matter and that adults are committed to their safety.



What are some practical ways I can incorporate student voice in my classroom?

- Ask students for feedback on classroom routines, wellbeing practices, or safety procedures (e.g. "What helps you feel safe in this space?")
- Ensure that any feedback being sought is listened to, considered and acted upon
- If suggestions are not acted upon, explain the reasons for this to the students
- Involve students in setting class expectations and reviewing them regularly.
- Use student-led discussions, suggestion boxes, or class meetings to give children structured ways to share their views.
- Share outcomes, tell students how their feedback influenced decisions, even small ones. This builds trust and demonstrates genuine respect for their voices.

How do I ensure that all students, including those with disabilities, cultural differences, or communication challenges, can have a voice?

- Incorporate many opportunities for student voice in the creation of PLPs and at PSG meetings
- Use multiple communication methods: visuals, symbols, interpreters, assistive technology, or bilingual support.
- Take extra time to ensure students understand questions and feel comfortable responding.
- Partner with families, support staff, and specialists to understand each student's communication style and needs.
- Create safe, predictable environments where every student feels their input is valued, regardless of background or ability.

Empowering every child to participate meaningfully ensures that all voices contribute to a safer, more inclusive school culture.

How can our school incorporate student voice in decision making?

- Add 'Seeking Student Voice' to Unit planning, meeting agendas, decision making pro-formas
- Establish student representation on committees or working groups
- Provide opportunities for students who participate in decision making, to give feedback to whole school – at assemblies or in year/class groups
- Use surveys, forums or class discussions to gather student perspectives
- Share outcomes transparently: let students know how their feedback has influenced decisions or led to change. Publish these successes via the school newsletter or website.
- Model partnership and respect: encourage and provide opportunities for collaboration between staff and students so children and young people feel valued as active contributors to their school community.