Victoria's new Child Safe Standards

Briefing for School Advisory Councils

**March 5th, 2024**

St.Thomas More

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Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge that Catholic schools and Parishes in the Archdiocese of Melbourne are situated on the lands of the five language groups that make up the Kulin Nations, who have walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge their continued deep spiritual connection and relationship to Country.

We pay respects to their Elders past, present and future, and commit to the ongoing journey of reconciliation.

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Chelsea Sporle
St Anne's School, Sunbury, Year 4
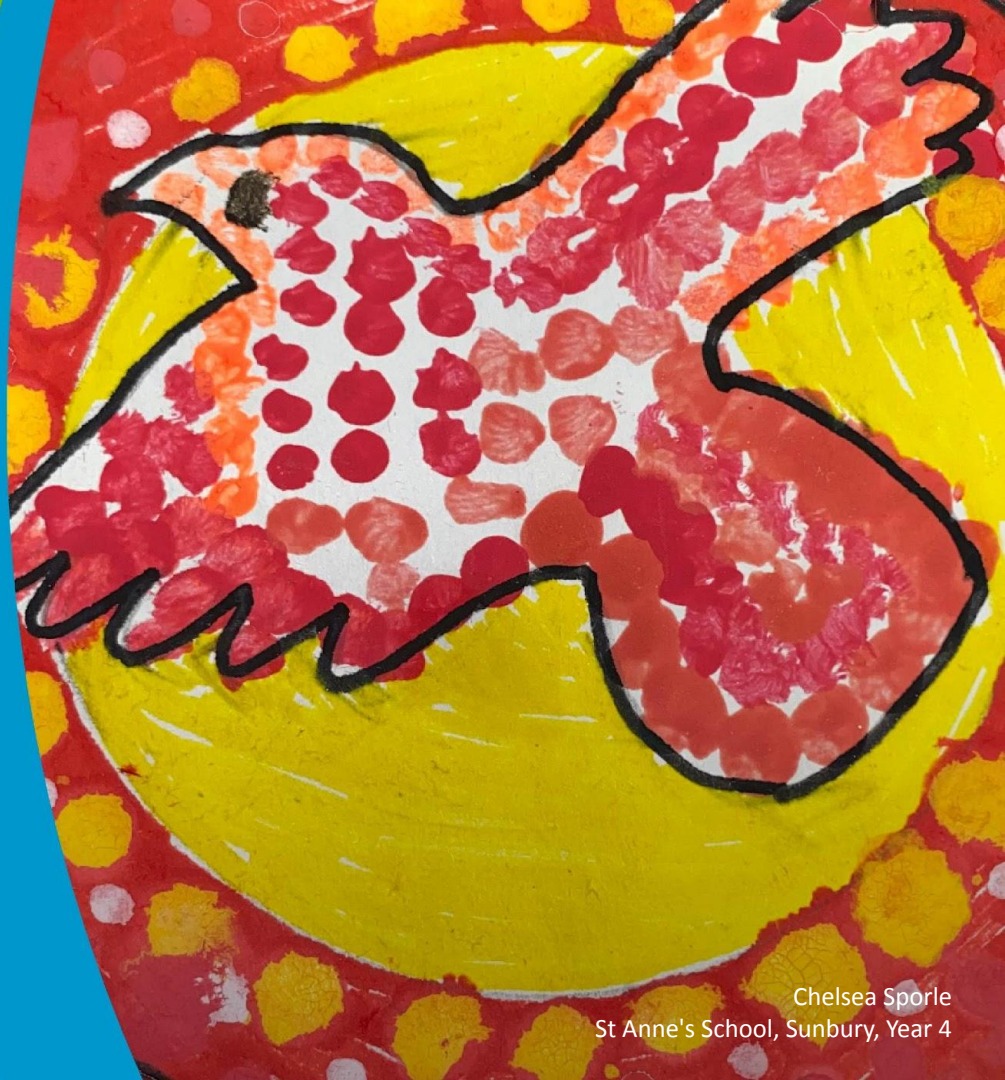
Prayer

Lord,

Please keep all children safe and protect them from harm. Cover them in your care and keep them in the safety of your powerful presence.

We pray for you to protect their coming and going, and to remind them that you're always with them.

Give them alertness, spiritual discernment, and wisdom to make the best choices.

We thank you God, as you walk ahead of them, beside them, and behind them.

Amen.

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In this presentation

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Overview of each Child Safe Standard

Questions

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Overview of the Child Safe Standards

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History of the Child Safe Standards

2012 – 13 **Betrayal of Trust Inquiry**	**2013 – 17** **Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse**	**2016** **Original Child Safe Standards implemented in Victoria**
2019 **Victoria agrees to adopt the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations**	**1 July 2021** **Victoria adopts new Child Safe Standards aligned with National Principles**	**1 July 2022** **New Child Safe Standards commence**

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Why the new Child Safe Standards are so important

- The current and new Child Safe Standards recognise that all children are vulnerable

- The Child Safe Standards require schools to **take steps to prevent child abuse** and **build a culture of child safety**

- Schools cannot assume that child abuse does not and cannot happen within their school or school community.

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Why the new Child Safe Standards are so important

The Child Safe Standards aim to:

- promote the safety of children

- prevent child abuse

- ensure effective processes are in place to respond to and report all allegations of child abuse.

The Child Safe Standards work by:

- driving changes in culture – embedding child safety in everyday thinking and practice

- providing a minimum standard of child safety

- highlighting we all have a role in keeping children safe from abuse.

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What's different?

The Child Safe Standards include new requirements to keep students safe covering:

- the involvement of families and students in child safety efforts
- schools' focus on safety for Aboriginal students
- better management of the risk of child abuse in online environments
- governance, systems and processes to keep students safe.

When do schools need to comply?

The new Child Safe Standards start 1 July 2022

On 1 July 2022, [Ministerial Order 1359](#) –
the framework for child safety in schools,
replaces Ministerial Order 870

Schools can build on existing child safety strategies,
policies and practices to strengthen their culture of child
safety and protect children from abuse

Education and Training Reform Act 2006

IMPLEMENTING THE CHILD SAFE STANDARDS – MANAGING THE RISK OF CHILD ABUSE IN SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL BOARDING PREMISES

Ministerial Order No. 1359

PART 1 – PRELIMINARY

1. **Objective**

   1.1   The objective of this Order is to specify the matters regarding which:

   a) a person or body applying for registration of a school or school boarding premises; and

   b) registered schools or registered school boarding premises

   must take action for the purposes of:

   c) embedding a culture of 'no tolerance' for child abuse; and

   d) complying with the Child Safe Standards as gazetted by the Minister for Child Protection; and

   e) complying with the prescribed minimum standards for the registration of schools in section 4.3.1(6)(d) and school boarding premises in section 4.3.8C(1)(d) of the **Education and Training Reform Act 2006**.

   Explanatory note: This Order describes a range of outcomes and actions that schools and school boarding premises must undertake to demonstrate compliance with the Child Safe Standards.

   It is important to note that where this Order specifies the creation of a policy, statement, procedure or other document, effective implementation of that policy, statement, procedure or other document is necessary to achieve the outcomes of each Child Safe Standard.

   This Order sets the minimum requirements for compliance with the Child Safe Standards for schools and school boarding premises. Schools and school boarding premises are encouraged to consider any additional actions consistent with each clause that will further contribute to the ongoing safety of children and students and the creation of child safe environments.

2. **Authorising provisions and commencement**

   2.1   This Order is made under sections 4.3.1(6)(d), 4.3.8C(1)(d) and 5.10.4 of the **Education and Training Reform Act 2006**.

   2.2   This Order comes into operation on 1 July 2022.

3. **Revocation**

   3.1   Ministerial Order 870 – Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises is revoked on 30 June 2022.

4. **Definitions**

   4.1   In this Order:

   child has the same meaning as in the **Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005**.

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Overview of each Child Safe Standard

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Child Safe Standard 1: Culturally safe environments

Schools must establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children, young people and students are respected and valued

- Aboriginal children and young people who don't feel safe being themselves and expressing their individuality may be less willing to report abuse

- Providing safe environments for children has positive, lifelong impacts that cannot be underestimated, and cultural safety is a key dimension of safety for Aboriginal children

- By supporting Aboriginal children to feel strong in their identity schools also help them enjoy their cultural rights

- Schools need to address all forms of racism and consider attitudes and practices that are a barrier to providing a culturally safe environment and addressing all forms of racism

Child Safe Standard 2: Leadership, governance and culture

Schools must ensure that child safety and wellbeing is embedded in school leadership, governance and culture

- School leaders and governing authorities have a vital role in establishing:

  - a culture where child abuse and harm is not tolerated
  - effective systems and processes to implement child safe policies and practices and manage child abuse risks

- Schools must take deliberate steps to promote child safety and wellbeing and protect children by:

  - embedding and promoting a child safety culture at all levels
  - school leaders actively modelling such a culture
  - ensuring transparent governance arrangements

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Child Safe Standard 3: Child and student empowerment

Schools must ensure that children, young people and students are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

- Empowering children and young people improves child safety

- Policies and practices that are shaped by children's and young people's views can better prevent the risk of harm

- Children and young people are more likely to speak up when they feel respected and confident that they will be heard

- Children and young people benefit from strong friendships. They often see their friends as their main source of support, information and advice, and will go to them for help

- Supporting students to raise concerns about the safety or wellbeing of their friends to encourage students to support their peers

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Child Safe Standard 4: Family engagement

Schools must ensure that families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing

- Involving families and communities in decisions relating to their children's safety and wellbeing:

  - recognises the important role they play in monitoring children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to disclose concerns
  - creates an open and transparent culture
  - promotes a greater understanding of child safety
  - encourages them to raise concerns or ideas for improvement

- Providing accessible and inclusive child safe information encourages families to engage in child safety and wellbeing discussions

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Child Safe Standard 5: Diversity and equity

Schools must ensure that equity is upheld, and diverse needs respected in policy and practice

- Schools need to create environments where all children and young people feel welcome

- Children and young people have unique abilities, skills and life experiences. Differences in backgrounds, personality and beliefs shape a child's experiences and needs. Their individual identity and sense of self can be fundamental to their wellbeing

- Children have better opportunities to fulfil their potential when diversity is valued

- Negative experiences like exclusion and discrimination can be harmful. They increase the risk of harm and abuse to a child and decrease the likelihood of them telling someone and receiving an effective response

Child Safe Standard 6: Suitable staff and volunteers

Schools must ensure that people working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice

- Selecting suitable people to work with children is vital to protecting children from harm

- Good recruitment practices:

  - create a safer workplace
  - reduce the opportunity for harm to occur
  - prevent, screen out or deter people who are unsuitable to work or volunteer with children
  - recruit staff who uphold the school values

- Rigorous selection processes and appropriate training and supervision helps keep staff and students safe

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Child Safe Standard 7: Complaints processes

Schools must ensure that processes for complaints and concerns are child focused

- Making a complaint can be challenging

- Complaints are more likely to be raised when there are clear, well-communicated policies and procedures for concerns or allegations

- Complaints handling processes need to focus on students and their safety needs. The process should be able to handle all kinds of complaints and concerns. A complaint might reveal a bigger issue or prevent a situation from escalating

- Empowering students to raise low-level concerns improves the likelihood they will feel comfortable making a disclosure or reporting abuse

- Reporting concerns is easier if the school has procedures that are child-friendly and accessible to students and the school community

Child Safe Standard 8: Safety knowledge, skills, awareness

Schools must ensure that staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training

- By delivering tailored training to all staff and volunteers, everyone will share an understanding of:

  - what child safety means
  - the importance of child safety
  - what to look for and what to do

- This provides staff and volunteers with the knowledge and skills they need to create a schoolwide culture of child safety

- Appropriate training and supervision helps keep staff and students safe and helps schools meet their child safety and occupational health and safety legal requirements

Child Safe Standard 9: Physical and online environments

Schools must ensure that physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children, young people and students to be harmed

- A thorough risk analysis is the first thing schools should do to promote child safety

- Effective risk analysis will consider all of the Child Safe Standards and risks in physical and online environments and procurement

- Online technologies are constantly changing which presents significant challenges for schools, parents and carers

- Arrangements with external agencies also create child safety risks. They create opportunities for unknown people to have contact with students

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Child Safe Standard 10: Review of child safety practices

Schools must ensure that implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved

- Being a child-safe organisation requires ongoing effort

- Child safe organisations have an open and transparent culture, learn from their mistakes, and put the interests of children first. Taking time to review policies, procedures and practices put child safety and wellbeing at the centre of the school's activities

- Regular reviews of policies, procedures and practices:

  - makes sure they are adequate, up-to-date and effective, fully implemented and followed by everyone
  - helps schools maintain the best approach to child safety and wellbeing and minimise the risk of harm

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Child Safe Standard 11: Implementation of practices

Schools must have policies and procedures that document how schools are safe for children, young people and students

- Being a child-safe organisation requires ongoing effort

- Schools are safer for children and students when child safety policies and procedures are championed by leaders and understood by all members of the school community

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(St Thomas More School Child Safety Team

Our Child Safety Team includes the following staff:

Declan McDermott - Principal

Marcia Janky – Student Wellbeing Leader

Questions

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