



Melbourne Archdiocese  
Catholic Schools

## Victorian Child Safe Standards

Volunteers training



# Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge that MACS offices and Catholic schools 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 since time immemorial. 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 truth-telling and deep listening, working together for reconciliation and justice.



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.

# Support available

*This session includes information on child abuse, including actions schools and volunteers need to take in prevention and reporting.*

You can talk to:

- Our school leadership team
- External services such as:
  - Your GP or another allied health professional
  - Beyond Blue: 1300 22 46 36 or [beyondblue.org.au](http://beyondblue.org.au)
  - Lifeline: 13 11 14 or [lifeline.org.au](http://lifeline.org.au)
  - 1800 Respect: 1800 737 732 or [1800Respect.org.au](http://1800Respect.org.au)



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- Responding to incidents, disclosures, and suspicions of child abuse
- Information sharing obligations for volunteers
- Recordkeeping



# Definitions: Child safety and child abuse

## Child safety

Child safety includes matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to suspicions, incidents, disclosures or allegations of child abuse.

## Child abuse

Child abuse includes:

- a) Any act committed against a child involving:
  - a sexual offence
  - grooming.
- b) The infliction, on a child, of:
  - physical violence
  - serious emotional or psychological harm.
- c) Serious neglect of a child.



# Why child safety is so important

- Our school is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children. We want children attending school to be safe, happy and respected.
- The 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 community.



# Victorian Child Safe Standards

- **Child Safe Standard 1** – Establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.
- **Child Safe Standard 2** – Ensure that child safety and wellbeing are embedded in school leadership, governance and culture.
- **Child Safe Standard 3** – Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
- **Child Safe Standard 4** – Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
- **Child Safe Standard 5** – Equity is upheld and diverse needs are respected in policy and practice.
- **Child Safe Standard 6** – People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
- **Child Safe Standard 7** – Ensure that processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.
- **Child Safe Standard 8** – Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
- **Child Safe Standard 9** – Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
- **Child Safe Standard 10** – Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
- **Child Safe Standard 11** – Policies and procedures that document how schools are safe for children, young people and students.
- Ministerial Order 1359 provides the framework for child safety in schools.



# Volunteer responsibilities to keep students safe



# Volunteer responsibilities to keep students safe

Volunteers make a valuable contribution to our school community and have responsibilities to keep students safe in our school environments.

Our school has developed policies and procedures to keep children safe and make sure we respond to any concerns.

Volunteers must be familiar with and follow our school's:

- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Child Safety and Wellbeing policy and procedures
- Procedures for responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse.



# Volunteers

As a school we are required to follow processes to make sure that volunteers, like staff, are suitable to work with children and can make a positive contribution to our school community. This includes:

- Suitability checks required for volunteers, which usually include:
  - Working with Children (WWC) Clearance
  - other suitability checks that may be needed based on the volunteer role, such as references, proof of identity, qualifications and work history involving children
- Our volunteer training and induction process
- Management and supervision arrangements
- Understanding volunteer obligations relating to privacy, information sharing and recordkeeping.



# Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

This policy and associated procedures:

- demonstrates our commitment to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe
- tells our community about our strategies and governance arrangements to keep children and young people safe
- helps us create a shared commitment to keeping children safe
- supports everyone in our school community to know their responsibilities for keeping children safe
- is publicly available.



All staff and **volunteers** will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school
- follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- act in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.



# Our commitment to child safety and wellbeing

- We are a child safe organisation that welcomes all children, young people and their families.
- We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.
- We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our school environments.
- Every person involved in our school has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.



# Establishing culturally safe environments and responding to diverse needs

- Our volunteers can support every student to have a positive experience in a safe environment.
- This includes supporting Aboriginal cultural safety and understanding the diverse circumstances of children and students.
- Everyone can:
  - promote cultural safety in our school community by recognising the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety.
  - pay particular attention to the needs of students with disability, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students who are unable to live at home, international students, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) students and Aboriginal students.



# Child Safety Code of Conduct

**Our school's Child Safety Code of Conduct** provides adults with a clear guide on the behaviour that is expected of them in our school environments, and:

- lists acceptable and unacceptable behaviours
- identifies professional boundaries and ethical behaviour
- applies to all school activities, including school camps, using digital technology and social media
- is publicly available.

## Who must follow it?

Staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of our school community involved in child-connected work, including school council members.



## Acceptable behaviours

- Upholding our commitment to child safety and following our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- Treating students and families in our school community with respect.
- Listening and responding to the views and concerns of students.
- Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students.
- Ensuring, as far as practicable, that adults are not alone with a student.
- Reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns.
- If child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected.

## Unacceptable behaviours

- Ignore or disregard concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse.
- Develop a relationship with a student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour.
- Display behaviours or engage with students in ways that are not justified by the educational or professional context.
- Ignore an adult's overly familiar or inappropriate behaviour towards a student.
- Communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels.
- Have contact with any student outside of school hours except when needed to deliver the school curriculum.



# Responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse

- Volunteers **must not** ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse or harm.
- You must report any concerns to a teacher or the school leadership team as quickly as possible.
- Everyone has a role to ensure children are safe – if something doesn't feel right, you must speak up.



Volunteers should follow the **Four Critical Actions for Schools** when responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse:

- 1. Respond to the emergency**

If a child is at immediate risk of harm, you must ensure their safety.

- 2. Report to authorities**

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, you must report your concerns to the principal or school leadership.

- 3. Contact parents/carers**

The principal and school will determine who needs to be contacted.

- 4. Provide support**

The school will determine the support for children impacted by abuse.

*For more information, see the [Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse Poster](#).*



# Signs of child abuse to look out for

Children and young people can be harmed by other children, students or adults.

Child abuse can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, grooming, serious emotional or psychological harm, neglect, or family violence.

It doesn't have to involve physical contact or force.

Child abuse can include:

- talking to a child in a sexually explicit way
- grooming a child for future sexual activity
- experiencing family violence
- failing to provide a child with an adequate standard of nutrition, supervision, or medical care.



There are a range of common physical and behavioural indicators that a child may be being abused.

### Video: Identifying signs of abuse



# Identifying and managing child safety risks

- Always follow our school's Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- Be aware of the behavioural and physical indicators of child abuse.
- Look out for any indicators of child abuse in children and young people you work with.
- Immediately raise concerns about any suspicions of child abuse with a teacher or school leadership.
- Alert a teacher or school leadership to any other potential risks you become aware of in our school environments.



# Reportable Conduct

The Reportable Conduct Scheme:

- requires some organisations (including our school) to respond to allegations of child abuse (and other child-related misconduct) made against their workers and volunteers, and to notify the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) of any allegations
- enables CCYP to independently oversee those responses
- facilitates information sharing between organisations, their regulators, Victoria Police, the Department of Justice and Regulation's Working With Children Check Unit and CCYP.



There are five types of 'reportable conduct':

- sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- significant neglect of a child.



# Information sharing obligations for volunteers

Any student information you become aware of because of your volunteer work must be managed sensitively and in accordance with our Privacy Policy.

You can share student information **with relevant school staff** to:

- support the student's education, wellbeing and health
- reduce the risk of harm to the student, other students, staff or visitors.

Volunteers must report any child safety concerns that they become aware of to a teacher or school leadership as soon as possible.

There are some circumstances where volunteers may also be obliged to disclose information to authorities outside of the school such as to Victoria Police.



# Recordkeeping

While it's unlikely you will be responsible for any school records during your volunteer work, any school records that you are responsible for must be provided to the school staff member associated with the relevant activity.

Our school has recordkeeping obligations, particularly with regard to child safety.



# Key things to remember

**Child safety at our school is everyone's responsibility.**

Volunteers have a responsibility to:

- always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- act in accordance with our school's **Child Safety Code of Conduct**
- take students' views seriously, especially when they raise concerns or worries about their safety or the safety of a friend
- raise concerns about a child's safety or any inappropriate behaviours in the school community with a teacher or school leadership immediately
- recognise and respect the diversity of the children, young people, and families at our school.



# Questions

# School contact for further information

- Add your school info here



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