



SMJ Horsham

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

CONTENTS

1. Introduction	2
2. Purpose of the Policy	2
3. Principles	2-3
4. Definitions used in this Policy	3-4
5. Policy Commitments	4-5
6. Responsibilities and Organisational Arrangements	6-7
a. Guide to Responsibilities of School Leadership	6
b. Guide to Responsibilities of School Staff	6-7
c. Organisational Arrangements	7
7. Expectation of our School Staff – Child Safety Code of Conduct	7
8. Student Safety and Participation	7
9. Reporting and Responding	7-8
10. Screening and Recruitment of School Staff	8-9
11. Child Safety – Education and Training for School Staff	9
12. Risk Management	10
13. Relevant Legislation	10
14. Related Policies	11
a. Catholic Education Melbourne Policies	11
b. School Policies	11
15. Breach of Policy	11
16. Review of this Child Safety Policy	12
17. References	12



SMJ Horsham

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

At Ss Michael and John's Primary School, we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of our Primary School. 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 (CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety).

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 Primary School (Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, n. 9).

2. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the strong commitment of Ss Michael and John's Primary School to the care, safety and wellbeing of all students at our Primary School. It provides an outline of the policies, procedures and strategies developed to keep students safe from harm, including all forms of abuse in our Primary School environment, on campus, online and in other locations provided by the Primary School.

This policy takes into account relevant legislative requirements within the state of Victoria, including the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in Ministerial Order No. 870.

This policy applies to Primary School staff, including Primary School employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy.

3. PRINCIPLES

Catholic Primary Schools have a moral, legal and mission-driven responsibility to create nurturing Primary School environments where children and young people are respected, their voices heard, and they are safe and feel safe (CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety).

The following principles underpin our commitment to child safety at Ss Michael and John's Primary School:

- All students deserve, as a fundamental right, safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect.
- Ss Michael and John's Primary School works in partnership with families and the community to ensure that they are engaged in decision-making processes, particularly those that have an impact on child safety and protection.
- All students have the right to a thorough and systematic education in all aspects of personal safety, in partnership with their parents/guardians/caregivers.

VRQA 4.2	Child Safety Policy	Developed & Ratified July 2019	Last Review/Revision July 2019	Next Review Jul 2022
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SMJ Horsham

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

- All adults in our Primary School, including teaching and non-teaching staff, clergy, volunteers, and contractors, have a responsibility to care for children and young people, to positively promote their wellbeing and to protect them from any kind of harm or abuse.
- The policies, guidelines and codes of conduct for the care, wellbeing and protection of students are based on honest, respectful and trusting relationships between adults and children and young people.
- Policies and practices demonstrate compliance with legislative requirements and cooperation with the Church, governments, the police and human services agencies.
- All persons involved in situations where harm is suspected or disclosed must be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect.
- Staff, clergy, volunteers, contractors, parents and students should feel free to raise concerns about child safety, knowing these will be taken seriously by Primary School leadership.
- Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained, with information only provided to those who have a right or a need to be informed, either legally or pastorally.

4. DEFINITIONS USED IN THIS POLICY

Child: A child or a young person enrolled as a student at the Primary School.

Child abuse includes:

- (a) any act committed against a child involving:
 - (i) a sexual offence
 - (ii) an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
- (b) the infliction, on a child, of:
 - (i) physical violence
 - (ii) serious emotional or psychological harm
- (c) serious neglect of a child. (Ministerial Order No. 870)

Child safety encompasses 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 incidents or allegations of child abuse. (Ministerial Order No. 870)

Child neglect includes a failure to provide the child with an adequate standard of nutrition, medical care, clothing, shelter or supervision to the extent that the health and physical development of the child is significantly impaired or placed at serious risk. (PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian Primary Schools)

Child physical abuse: Generally, it consists of any non-accidental infliction of physical violence on a child by any person. (PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian Primary Schools)



SMJ Horsham

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

Child sexual abuse is when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve them in sexual activity. It can include a wide range of sexual activity and does not always involve physical contact or force. (PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian Primary Schools)

Emotional child abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats, or by witnessing family violence. (PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian Primary Schools)

Grooming is when a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later date. It can include communication and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent/carer. (PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian Primary Schools)

Mandatory Reporting: The legal requirement under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.) to protect children from harm relating to physical and sexual abuse. The principal, teachers, medical practitioners and nurses at a Primary School are mandatory reporters under this Act. (PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian Primary Schools)

Reasonable Belief: When Primary School staff are concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person, they must assess that concern to determine if a report should be made to the relevant agency. This process of considering all relevant information and observations is known as forming a 'reasonable belief'. A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumour or speculation. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. (PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian Primary Schools)

Primary School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the Primary School governing authority for use by a child during or outside Primary School hours, including:

- a. a campus of the Primary School
- b. online Primary School environments (including email and intranet systems)
- c. other locations provided by the Primary School for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for Primary School camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events). (Ministerial Order No. 870)

Primary School staff means an individual working in a Primary School environment who is:

- a. directly engaged or employed by a Primary School governing authority
- b. a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)
- c. a minister of religion. (Ministerial Order No. 870)



SMJ Horsham

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

5. POLICY COMMITMENTS

All students enrolled at Ss Michael and John's Primary School have the right to feel safe and be safe. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our priority, and we do not and will not tolerate child abuse. We aim to create a child-safe and child-friendly environment where children are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety. There is particular attention paid to the most vulnerable children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with a disability.

Our commitment to our students

- a. We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people enrolled in our Primary School.
- b. We commit to providing children and young people with positive and nurturing experiences.
- (c) We commit to listening to children and young people and empowering them by taking their views seriously and addressing any concerns that they raise with us.
- c. We commit to taking action to ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse or harm.
- d. We commit to teaching children and young people the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing.
- e. We commit to seeking input and feedback from students regarding the creation of a safe Primary School environment.

Our commitment to parents and carers

- a. We commit to communicating honestly and openly with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children.
- b. We commit to engaging with, and listening to, the views of parents and carers about our child-safety practice, policies and procedures.
- c. We commit to transparency in our decision-making with parents and carers where it will not compromise the safety of children or young people.
- d. We commit to acknowledging the cultural diversity of students and families, and being sensitive to how this may impact on student safety issues.
- e. We commit to continuously reviewing and improving our systems to protect children from abuse.

Our commitment to our Primary School staff (Primary School employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy)

- a. We commit to providing all Ss Michael and John's staff with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles. This will include regular and appropriate learning opportunities.
- b. We commit to providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm policy and procedures in relation to child safety and young people's protection and wellbeing. This will include annual training in the principles and intent of the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct, and staff responsibilities to report concerns.



SMJ Horsham

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

- c. We commit to listening to all concerns voiced by Ss Michael and John's staff, clergy, volunteers, and contractors about keeping children and young people safe from harm.
- d. We commit to providing opportunities for Ss Michael and John's Primary School employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES AND ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Everyone employed or volunteering at Ss Michael and John's Primary School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all students is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make. (CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety)

The Primary School has allocated roles and responsibilities for child safety as follows.

Guide to Responsibilities of Primary School Leadership

The principal, the School governing authority and School leaders at Ss Michael and John's Primary School, recognise their particular responsibility to ensure the development of preventative and proactive strategies that promote a culture of openness, awareness of and shared responsibility for child safety. Responsibilities include:

- creating an environment for children and young people to be safe and to feel safe
- upholding high principles and standards for all staff, clergy, volunteers, and contractors
- promoting models of behaviour between adults and children and young people based on mutual respect and consideration
- ensuring thorough and rigorous practices are applied in the recruitment, screening and ongoing professional learning of staff
- ensuring that SMJ personnel have regular and appropriate learning to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters
- providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm legislative obligations, policy and procedures in relation to child and young people's protection and wellbeing
- ensuring the Ss Michael & John's Primary School meets the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in Ministerial Order No. 870.
- ensuring the Ss Michael & John's Primary School takes specific action to protect children from abuse in line with the three new criminal offences introduced under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.) and in line with the PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian Primary Schools.

Guide to Responsibilities of Primary School Staff

VRQA 4.2	Child Safety Policy	Developed & Ratified July 2019	Last Review/Revision July 2019	Next Review Jul 2022
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SMJ Horsham

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

Responsibilities of Ss Michael & John's Primary School staff (SMJ employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy) include:

- treating children and young people with dignity and respect, acting with propriety, providing a duty of care, and protecting children and young people in their care
- following the legislative and internal processes of SMJ in the course of their work, if they form a reasonable belief that a child or young person has been or is being abused or neglected
- providing a physically and psychologically safe environment where the wellbeing of children and young people is nurtured
- undertaking regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to child safety and the wellbeing of children and young people
- assisting children and young people to develop positive, responsible and caring attitudes and behaviours which recognise the rights of all people to be safe and free from abuse
- following the Ss Michael & John's Primary School's Child Safety Code of Conduct.

Organisational Arrangements

Ss Michael and John's Primary School enacts this commitment to child safety through:

- appointment of Student Wellbeing Leader as the Child Protection Officer
- providing a budget allocation to enable regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to child safety and the wellbeing of children and young people
- participation in the diocesan child protection network
- use of Ss Michael & John's Primary School website and newsletter to remind and to keep parents and carers informed of child safety commitments, procedures and arrangements

7. EXPECTATION OF OUR PRIMARY SCHOOL STAFF – CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

At Ss Michael and John's Primary School, we expect all employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy to be proactive in ensuring the safety of students at all times. It is an expectation that if there are concerns about the safety of any child, the appropriate action will be taken. All Ss Michael & John's Primary School staff must remain familiar with the relevant laws, the code of conduct, and policies and procedures about child protection and to comply with all requirements. SMJ has developed a Child Safety Code of Conduct that is available from the office upon request and the School's website. This Code of Conduct recognises the critical role that all school staff play in protecting the students in our care and establishes clear expectations of SMJ employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy for appropriate behaviour with children to safeguard them against abuse and or neglect. Our Code also protects staff through clarification of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

VRQA 4.2	Child Safety Policy	Developed & Ratified July 2019	Last Review/Revision July 2019	Next Review Jul 2022
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SMJ Horsham

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

8. STUDENT SAFETY AND PARTICIPATION

At Ss Michael and John's Primary School, we actively encourage all students to openly express their views and feel comfortable about giving voice to the things that are important to them.

We teach students about what they can do if they feel unsafe and enable them to understand, identify, discuss and report on child safety. We listen to and act on any concerns students, or their parents or carers, raise with us.

9. REPORTING AND RESPONDING

Ss Michael & John's Primary School records any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and stores the records in accordance with security and privacy requirements. SMJ complies with legal obligations that relate to managing the risk of child abuse under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.), the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.) and the recommendations of the Betrayal of Trust report.

Child protection reporting obligations fall under separate pieces of legislation with differing reporting requirements.

Ss Michael and John's Primary School's **Mandatory Reporting Policy** sets out the actions required under the relevant legislation when there is a reasonable belief that a child at our school needs protection or a criminal offence has been committed and provides guidance and procedures on how to make a report.

Our policy assists staff, volunteers and families to:

- identify the indicators of a child or young person who may need protection
- understand how a 'reasonable belief' is formed
- make a report of a child or young person who may need protection
- comply with mandatory reporting obligations under child protection law and their legal obligations relating to criminal child abuse and grooming under criminal law.

SMJ has also established internal processes to ensure that appropriate action is taken to respond to concerns about the wellbeing and/or safety of a student.

SMJ's Child Protection Officers play an essential role in ensuring that Ss Michael and John's Primary School is a Child Safe Primary School.

Staff and volunteers with concerns about the wellbeing and/or safety of a student can seek advice from the Child Protection Officer and/or the Principal, who can assist you to make a report. If your concern is about the Principal's conduct, you can speak to the Primary School Governing Authority or to the Catholic Education Office Ballarat Child Protection Officer.

VRQA 4.2	Child Safety Policy	Developed & Ratified July 2019	Last Review/Revision July 2019	Next Review Jul 2022
----------	---------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	----------------------



SMJ Horsham

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

Parents and Carers with concerns about the wellbeing and/or safety of a student can speak to the Child Protection Officer/Principal who can assist you to decide if it is necessary to make a report. If your concern is about the Principal's conduct, you can speak to the Primary School Governing Authority or to the Catholic Education Office Ballarat Child Protection Officer.

Our complaints and disclosure processes are outlined in the Ss Michael and John's Primary School Complaints and Grievance Policy.

10. SCREENING AND RECRUITMENT OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STAFF

Ss Michael and John's Primary School will apply thorough and rigorous screening processes in the recruitment of employees and volunteers involved in child-connected work. Our commitment to child safety and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements for such employee, contractor and volunteer positions, and all applicants are provided with copies of the Ss Michael & John's Primary School's Child Safety Code of Conduct and the Child Safety Policy.

When recruiting and selecting employees, contractors and volunteers involved in child-connected work, we make all reasonable efforts to:

- confirm the applicant's Working with Children Check and National Police Check status and/or professional registration (as relevant)
- obtain proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications
- verify the applicant's history of work involving children
- obtain references that address the applicant's suitability for the job and working with children.

We have processes for monitoring and assessing the continuing suitability of Ss Michael & John's Primary School staff to work with children, including regular reviews of the status of Working with Children Checks and staff professional registration requirements such as Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration.

11. CHILD SAFETY – EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL STAFF

Ss Michael and John's Primary School provides employees, volunteers and clergy with regular and appropriate opportunities to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters. This includes induction, ongoing training and professional learning to ensure that everyone understands their professional and legal obligations and responsibilities and the procedures for reporting suspicion of child abuse and neglect.

Staff Induction specifically includes:

- familiarisation with this Child Safety Policy and its many implications

VRQA 4.2	Child Safety Policy	Developed & Ratified July 2019	Last Review/Revision July 2019	Next Review Jul 2022
----------	---------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	----------------------



SMJ Horsham

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

- familiarisation with and a signed commitment to the Ss Michael and John's Primary School Child Safety Code of Conduct
- training about child protection reporting obligations, protocols for receiving/recording complaints
- training and familiarisation around all the SMJ policies, codes, practices and procedures governing child safety and child-connected work
- understanding of supervision arrangements that are in place for all staff who engage in child connected work

Staff Professional Learning provides opportunities for staff (and where appropriate, volunteers) to:

- maintain, develop and improve skills and capabilities around child safety, including relevant legislative requirements
- develop an understanding of the risk of harm to children; the different types of harm; and how to identify grooming and abuse
- understand and build confidence around their reporting obligations
- complete the annual online mandatory reporting module

12. RISK MANAGEMENT

At Ss Michael and John's Primary School we are committed to proactively and systematically identifying and assessing risks to student safety across our whole school environment, and reducing or eliminating (where possible) all potential sources of harm. We document, implement, monitor and periodically review our risk management strategies for child safety and ensure that the strategies change as needed and as new risks arise.

We will enact this commitment through:

- Child safety as a standing item on staff meeting agenda
- Periodic review of the Child Safety Risk Register
- Completing a risk assessment of all new activities

13. RELEVANT LEGISLATION

- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)
- Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic.)
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic.)
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic.)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.) – Three new criminal offences have been introduced under this Act:

- a) **Failure to disclose offence:** Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 has an obligation

VRQA 4.2	Child Safety Policy	Developed & Ratified July 2019	Last Review/Revision July 2019	Next Review Jul 2022
----------	---------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	----------------------



SMJ Horsham

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

to report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to the police is a criminal offence.

- b) **Failure to protect offence:** The offence will apply where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation. A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- c) **Grooming offence:** This offence targets predatory conduct designed to facilitate later sexual activity with a child. Grooming can be conducted in person or online, for example via interaction through social media, web forums and emails.

14. RELATED POLICIES

Ballarat Diocesan Primary Schools Education Board Related Policies

- BDSAC Child Protection Policy 2017
- BDSAC Complaints Policy 2017
- BDSAC Pastoral Care Policy 2016
- BDSAC Guidelines for Behaviour Support 2016
- CEOB Police and Department of Health and Human Services Interview Protocols March 2017
- CECV Whole Primary School Approaches to Supporting Positive Behaviour

Catholic Education Melbourne Related Policies (endorsed by CEOB)

- Policy 2.19: Child Protection – Reporting Obligations

Primary School Policies The following policies are available from the Primary School office upon request:

- Child Protection – Reporting Obligations
- Pastoral Care Policy
- ICT Policy
- Responsible Use of Social Media Policy
- Grievance and Complaints Procedures

15. BREACH OF POLICY

VRQA 4.2	Child Safety Policy	Developed & Ratified July 2019	Last Review/Revision July 2019	Next Review Jul 2022
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SMJ Horsham

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

Where an **employee** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this Policy, Ss Michael and John's Primary School may start the process under clause 13 of the Victorian Catholic Education Multi Enterprise Agreement 2013 (VCEMEA) for managing employment concerns. This may result in disciplinary consequences.

Where the **principal** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the concerned party is advised to contact the parish priest or the employer. Relevant notification should also be made to the Director of Catholic Education, Diocese of Ballarat.

Where any **other member of the Primary School community** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the Primary School is to take appropriate action, including in accordance with the Primary School's Child Protection – Reporting Obligations, Complaints Resolution Policy and/or contact the Diocesan Professional Standards Coordinator or relevant Educational Consultant.

16. REVIEW OF THIS CHILD SAFETY POLICY

At Ss Michael and John's Primary School, we are committed to the continuous improvement of our child safety systems and practices. We intend this policy to be a dynamic document that will be regularly reviewed (at minimum every three years) to ensure it is working in practice and updated to accommodate changes in legislation or circumstance.

17. REFERENCES

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) 2016, Commitment Statement to Child Safety: A safe and nurturing culture for all children and young people in Catholic Primary Schools.

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) 2013, Victorian Catholic Education Multi Enterprise Agreement 2013, CECV.

Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, The Catholic Primary School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, Vatican.

Department of Education, 2016, PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian Primary Schools

State of Victoria 2016, Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Primary Schools: Ministerial Order No. 870, Education & Training Reform Act 2006, Victorian Government Gazette No. S2.

Parliament of Victoria, Family and Community Development Committee, 2013, Betrayal of Trust

VRQA 4.2	Child Safety Policy	Developed & Ratified July 2019	Last Review/Revision July 2019	Next Review Jul 2022
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