



*Our Lady of Sion College*

# **Child Safety Policy**

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## 1. Introduction

The Our Lady of Sion College Mission statement calls us to always *'speak the truth in love'* and compels us to act in the pursuit of *'justice and truth'*. Consistent with our mission as a Catholic school, the Our Lady of Sion College community is committed to a culture of child safety and a zero tolerance of child abuse. Our Child Safety Policy has a specific focus on safeguarding the young people of Our Lady of Sion College against sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect.

## 2. Purpose of the Policy

Our Lady of Sion College is strongly committed to the care, safety and wellbeing of all students in our school. As such this policy demonstrates our commitment and provides an outline of the policies, procedures and strategies developed to keep students safe from harm, including all forms of abuse in our College environment, on campus, online and in other locations provided by the College.

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](#) and the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

This policy applies but is not limited to all **College staff**, including employees, volunteers, contractors, clergy and religious.

## 3. Principles

*Catholic schools have a moral, legal and mission driven responsibility to create nurturing school environments where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard and where they are safe and feel safe. (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd 2016).*

**The following principles underpin our commitment to child safety at Our Lady of Sion:**

- All students at Our Lady of Sion deserve as a fundamental right, safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect
- Our 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.
- All **College staff** 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, children and young people.
- Policies and practices demonstrate compliance with legislative requirements and co-operation 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.

- **College staff**, parents/guardians, carers and students should feel free to raise concerns about child safety, knowing these will be taken seriously by College leadership.
- Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained, with information being 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 Our Lady of Sion College.

**Child abuse** includes:

- (a) any act committed against a child involving:
- a sexual offence
  - an offence under section 49B(2) of the **Crimes Act 1958** (grooming)
- (b) the infliction, on a child, of:
- physical violence
  - 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 schools](#))

**Child physical abuse:** Generally, 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 schools](#))

**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 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 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 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 school are mandatory reporters under this Act. ([PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#))

**Reasonable Belief:** When 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 schools](#))

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

- (a) a campus of the College
- (b) online College environments (including email and intranet systems)
- (c) other locations provided by the College for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for College camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

([Ministerial Order No. 870](#))

**College staff** means an individual working in the College environment who is:

- (a) directly engaged or employed by a 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](#))
- (d) religious

**Reportable Conduct** is broken down into listed in the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005:

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

**Reportable Conduct Scheme** provides a system to independently oversight and regulate responses to suspected child abuse. It provides a pathway to prevent people who shouldn't work with children from working with children. It offers a centralised reporting to the Commission for Children & Young People of any allegations against 'employees', regarding child abuse and misconduct involving children.

## 5. Policy Commitments

All students enrolled at Our Lady of Sion have the right to feel safe and be safe. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first 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 at Our Lady of Sion.
- (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.
- (d) We commit to taking action to ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse or harm.
- (e) We commit to teaching children and young people the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing.
- (f) We commit to seeking input and feedback from our students regarding the creation of a safe College environment.

#### **Our commitment to parents/guardians/carers**

- (a) We commit to communicating honestly and openly with parents/guardians and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children.
- (b) We commit to engaging with, and listening to, the views of parents/guardians and carers about our child-safety practices, 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 College staff**

- (a) We commit to providing all Our Lady of Sion 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.
- (c) We commit to listening to all concerns voiced by Our Lady of Sion **College staff** about keeping children and young people safe from harm.
- (d) We commit to addressing concerns raised in accordance with Ministerial Order 870 and the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
- (e) We commit to providing opportunities for Our Lady of Sion **College staff** 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 Our Lady of Sion 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 College has allocated roles and responsibilities for child safety as follows.

## 6.1 Guide to Responsibilities of College Leadership

The College Board, Principal and College leaders at Our Lady of Sion 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 **College staff**
- 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 College 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 College meets the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in [Ministerial Order No. 870](#).
- ensuring the school takes specific action to protect children from abuse in line with the three new criminal offences introduced under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.), in line with the [PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#) and the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

## 6.2 Guide to Responsibilities of College Staff

Responsibilities of **College staff** 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 College processes 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 College's Child Safety Code of Conduct.

### 6.3 Organisational Arrangements

The Our Lady of Sion Child Safety Team consists of the Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing, Deputy Principal Faith and Mission and Deputy Principal Learning and Teaching, and reports to the Principal. They work with the College Counsellors, Year Level Co-ordinators and Learning Area Leaders and will be responsible for the education, management and promotion of Child Safety.

## 7. Expectation of our College Staff – Child Safety Code of Conduct

At Our Lady of Sion community, we expect **College staff** to proactively ensure the safety of students at all times and to take appropriate action if there are concerns about the safety of any child at the College. All **College staff** must remain familiar with the relevant laws, the code of conduct, and policies and procedures in relation to child protection and to comply with all requirements. We have developed a Child Safety Code of Conduct which recognises the critical role that **College staff** play in protecting the students in our care and establishes clear expectations of **College staff** for appropriate behaviour with children in order to safeguard them against abuse and or neglect.

Our Code also protects **College staff** through clarification of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Copies of the Code of Conduct must be sighted and signed by College Board members and **College staff** upon commencement of employment and when amendments are made. Signed copies will be retained on file by the College.

Visitors to the College will also be required to sign an electronic declaration that they have read the Our Lady of Sion Code of Code upon arrival at the College Reception.

## 8. Student Safety and Participation

At Our Lady of Sion, 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.

Student participation and empowerment will be facilitated by a range of appropriate strategies including

- opportunities to understand the nature of child abuse in particular the nature of grooming
- helping students to discern what constitutes child abuse
- the means by which students can report concerns

Participation and empowerment will be facilitated through discussion and forums which are delivered through our Pastoral, and Learning and Teaching Programs. Fortnightly newsletter items regularly provide advice and information regarding cyberbullying and grooming.

## 9. Reporting and Responding

Our College 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. Our College 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.), Reportable Conduct Scheme and the recommendations of the [Betrayal of Trust](#) report.

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

The Our Lady of Sion Child Protection – Reporting Obligations Policy and the Victorian Department of Education and Training *PROTECT - Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victoria* schools guide and the Reportable Conduct Scheme set out the actions required under the relevant legislation when there is a reasonable belief that a child at our College is in need of protection or a criminal offence has been committed. All documents provide guidance and procedures on when and how to make a report. They do so by assisting **College staff** and families to:

- identify the indicators of a child or young person who may be in need of protection
- identify signs of child abuse including physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, family violence and grooming
- understand how a ‘reasonable belief’ is formed
- make a report of a child or young person who may be in need of protection
- comply with mandatory reporting obligations under child protection law and their legal obligations relating to criminal child abuse and grooming under criminal law

Our College 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. These processes are informed by the Our Lady of Sion College Reporting Obligations Policy, the Reportable Conduct Scheme and the Victorian Department of Education and Training *PROTECT - Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victoria* schools guide:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/schoolsguide.aspx> which require the following four actions to be undertaken:

- Responding to an emergency
- Responding to Authorities
- Contacting Parents/Carers
- Providing ongoing support

The following represents actions to be taken in some possible but not exhaustive scenarios:

- A. Steps when a child discloses information about an alleged child abuse at school. The staff member should:
  1. Ensure the student is safe
  2. Re-assure the student that you will listen to their concerns
  3. Explain your responsibility to share this information in order to help the student
  4. Gather all available information and take notes in order to complete the PROTECT report later that day

5. Contact a member of the Child Safe Team
  6. Remain with the student until a member of the Child Safe Team advises
  7. Ensure that an appropriate response by the College is guided by the *PROTECT - Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victoria schools guide*
- B. If the allegation comes via email by a student who is alleging abuse against them, the staff member should:
1. Ensure the student is safe
    - a. If they feel they are safe, re-assure them and organise to meet them the next morning
    - b. If they feel they are not safe, re-assure them and inform them you will contact someone who can help
      - i. Contact the police and Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS)
  2. Contact a member of the Child Safe Team immediately
  3. Gather all available information and take notes in order to complete the PROTECT report later that day
  4. Ensure that an appropriate response by the College is guided by the *PROTECT - Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victoria schools guide*
- C. If the allegation comes via a third party (volunteer, parent/guardian, other student, social media, other), the staff member should:
1. Explain that our College has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously
  2. Ask for the details regarding their concerns and advise that you will take notes
  3. Explain your responsibility to share this information in order to help the student
  4. Gather all available information and take notes in order to complete the PROTECT report later that day
  5. Contact a member of the Child Safe Team immediately if possible
  6. Ensure the student is safe
    - a. If they feel they are safe, re-assure them and organise to meet them
    - b. If they feel they are not safe, re-assure them and inform them you will contact someone who can help
  7. Ensure that an appropriate response by the College is guided by the *PROTECT - Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victoria schools guide*

Once information is gathered, the staff member in discussion with the Child Safety Team, identifies the most appropriate action to be taken according to the Our Lady of Sion Child Protection – Reporting Obligations Policy and *PROTECT - Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victoria schools guide*.

Our complaints and disclosure processes are outlined and detailed in the following policies and procedures:

1. Grievance Resolution Policy

2. Critical Incidents Policy and Procedures Manual
3. Counselling Policy
4. *PROTECT - Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victoria schools guide*
5. Reportable Conduct Scheme

## 10. Screening and Recruitment of College Staff

Our Lady of Sion College will follow the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) Guidelines on the Employment of Staff in Catholic Schools, 2016. The College 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 College'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
- obtain a signed Code of Conduct

We have processes for monitoring and assessing the continuing suitability of **College 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 College Staff

Our Lady of Sion provides **College staff** with regular and appropriate opportunities to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters. This includes induction, ongoing training, briefings 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.

At Our Lady of Sion, we commit to creating a child safe environment by providing education and training to all staff that includes but is not limited to the following opportunities:

- Our induction process
- Annual completion by all staff of the *Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations eLearning module for Government and non-Government schools*:  
<http://www.elearn.com.au/det/protectingchildren/schools/>
- Annual meetings to re-affirm expectations and procedures
- Regular wellbeing briefings for staff

- Weekly Homeroom teacher, Pastoral and Students at Risk (STAR) team meetings
- Regular staff Professional Practice Consultation meetings regarding child safety and expectations
- External Professional Learning opportunities including information about post-graduate qualifications in Wellbeing and Child Safety

At Our Lady of Sion, we also commit to creating a child safe environment by providing education and training. All **College staff** who engage with the College will receive a copy of the Our Lady of Sion Child Safety Policy and Child Safe Code of Conduct. They will also receive and be required to sign the Our Lady of Sion Code of Conduct prior to commencing work or when amendments are made.

## 12. Risk Management

At Our Lady of Sion, we are committed to proactively and systematically identifying and assessing risks to student safety across our whole College 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.

The Leadership Team and Risk Management Team will annually review the *Our Lady of Sion Risk Management Register* to ensure that child safe risks are identified and mitigation strategies are enacted. The College Risk Management procedures are also reported and endorsed by the College Board.

## 13. Relevant Legislation

- *Ministerial Order 870*
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)*
- *Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic.) Amended 2016*
- *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 to report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to 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.
    - i) **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

### 14.1 Catholic Education Melbourne Policies

- [Policy 2.19: Child Protection – Reporting Obligations](#)
- [Policy 2.19a: School Guidelines –Police and DHHS Interview Protocols](#)
- [Policy 2.20: Complaints Policy](#)
- [Policy 2.26: Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools](#)
- [CEM Guidelines for Behaviour Support](#)
- [CECV Whole School Approaches to Supporting Positive Behaviour](#)

### 14.2 Related College Policies

- *Camps*
- *Child Protection – Reporting Obligations*
- *Communication*
- *Counselling*
- *Cybersafety*
- *Electronic Communication (Staff)*
- *Excursion & Incursion*
- *Grievance Resolution*
- *Guest Presenters*
- *International Students Visits to the College*
- *Interstate and International Trips*
- *Pastoral Care Policy*
- *Risk Management*

## 15. Breach of Policy

Where an **employee** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this Policy, Our Lady of Sion 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 Chair of the College Board or the Chair of the Members of Our Lady of Sion. Relevant notification should also be made to Catholic Education Melbourne (Office of Professional Conduct, Ethics and Investigation).

Where any **other member of the College community** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the College is to take appropriate action, including in accordance with the Our Lady of Sion Child Protection – Reporting Obligations Policy, and/or contact Catholic Education Melbourne (Office of Professional Conduct, Ethics and Investigation).

## 16. Review of this Child Safety Policy

At Our Lady of Sion, we are committed to continuous improvement of our child safety systems and practices. We intend this policy to be a dynamic document that will be regularly reviewed to ensure it is working in practice and updated to accommodate changes in legislation or circumstance.

We will maintain a history of updates to the policy.

### History of Updates to Policy

Date	Comment (e.g. major review, minor review)
27 July 2016	Ratification by the Our Lady of Sion College Board
## 2018	Ratification by the Our Lady of Sion College Board

## 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 schools.*

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) 2013, <http://www.cecv.catholic.edu.au/Industrial-Relations/Salary-and-Conditions/Victorian-Catholic-Education-Multi-Enterprise-Agre>

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

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

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

Safe Schools Hub 2014, *National Safe Schools Framework Glossary*, Australian Government Department of Education and Training.

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

Victorian Government Department of Justice 2016, *Betrayal of Trust Implementation*.

Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority [Resources and Toolkit](#)