

## **Child Protection & Safety Policy**

### **Commitment to Child Safety**

All students enrolled, and any child visiting, have a right to feel safe and be safe all of the time. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we have zero tolerance for child abuse. At Sacred Heart we strive to maintain a child safe and child friendly environment where children feel safe and are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety. We are committed to continually reviewing our Child Safe policies and practices to ensure that every effort is made for ongoing improvement of our Child Safe environment.

We at Sacred Heart recognise that some groups of children are particularly vulnerable and we are committed to promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal/linguistically diverse children and also promoting the safety of children with a disability.

### **Overview**

Sacred Heart School has developed the following Child Safe Policy. This Policy is an overarching document that provides key elements of our approach to protecting children from abuse.

This policy was written to demonstrate the strong commitment of the whole school community of Sacred Heart, leaders, staff, volunteers, students, their families, to child safety and to provide an outline of the policies and procedures developed to keep everyone safe from harm, including all forms of abuse. This policy forms the foundation of the School's procedures, practices, decision-making processes and ultimately the School's culture with respect to child safety.

The School's Child Safe Policy has been approved and endorsed by the Sacred Heart School Board and is regularly reviewed by the Board.

### **Our Child Safe Policy**

#### **Objectives**

This policy provides the framework for:

- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child protection within Sacred Heart School
- the creation of a positive and robust child protection culture
- the promotion and open discussion of child protection issues within the College
- compliance with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection in Victoria.

#### **Our Underpinning Values**

The staff and volunteers of Sacred Heart encourage students to express their views. We listen to their suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them. 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. We listen to and act on any concerns students, or their parents or carers, raise with us.

The School's commitment to child safety is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse.

These are:

- ✓ All children have the right to be safe.
- ✓ The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
- ✓ The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected.
- ✓ Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Safe Code of Conduct and Staff and Student Professional Boundaries policy.
- ✓ The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.
- ✓ Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our College community.
- ✓ Procedures are in place to screen all staff, Direct Contact Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers who have direct contact with children.
- ✓ Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
- ✓ Child protection training is mandatory for all School Board members, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers.
- ✓ Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the College community.
- ✓ Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- ✓ Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

### **Valuing Diversity & Inclusion**

We value and celebrate diversity, especially cultural diversity, and we do not tolerate discriminatory practices. To achieve this, we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students and their families
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) and their families
- promote the personal safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability and make them feel welcome and part of all aspects of Sacred Heart life.

### **Recruiting Staff and Volunteers**

Sacred Heart will apply the most thorough and rigorous standards in the recruitment and screening of staff and volunteers. We interview and conduct referee checks on all staff and volunteers and require police checks and Working With Children Checks (WWCC) for all staff and volunteers. Our commitment to Child Safety and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements for staff and volunteer positions.

For more information, see our Recruitment Policy and Procedures

## **Supporting Staff and Volunteers**

Sacred Heart provides support and supervision to all staff and volunteers so people feel valued, respected, affirmed in their work and fairly treated. We have a Code of Conduct to provide guidance to our staff and volunteers, all of whom receive training on the requirements of the Code.

## **Reporting a Child Safety Concern or Complaint**

Our school records any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Code of Conduct, and store the records in accordance with security and privacy requirements. Our complaints and disclosure processes are outlined and detailed in the following policies and procedures:

- Child Safe Reporting Procedure
- Child Safe Reporting and Responding Policy
- Child Protection Complaints & Disclosure Policy
- Records Management Policy

## **Managing Risk**

Risk management is an approach that minimises the potential for child abuse or harm to occur. Our Risk Management Plan outlines and details all aspects of risk across our whole school environment (on site and off site Sacred Heart activities) with specific activity risk assessments. In addition to our general Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse and harm to our students.

## **Our Child Safety Officer**

Our Child Protection Program provides detailed guidance for the School Board, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers as to how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to one of our School's nominated Child Safe Officers. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.

Pauline Hindson and Matthew Cameron have been appointed as Child Safety Officers with specific responsibility for responding to any complaints made by staff, volunteers, parents or students in relation to Child Safety.

Communications will be treated confidentially on a “need to know basis”.

## **Policy and Program Review**

Sacred Heart is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Protection Program. The Program is regularly reviewed for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child protection related laws, regulations and standards.

**Last Review: November 2019**