

Child Safeguarding Policy

Policy Statement

St Michael's College is *"an inclusive and respectful community where each individual is known, valued and cared for"* (St Michael's College, Mission and Vision) and is actively committed to fostering and ensuring a culture of safeguarding that recognises and upholds the dignity and rights of all, particularly children, young people and the vulnerable.

The St Michael's College school community has a zero tolerance of child abuse. Allegations or concerns relating to the abuse or safety of a child or young person (including historical matters) are responded to seriously and reported in line with agreed policies, practices and legislation. Anyone who brings forward a suspicion, concern, knowledge or allegation of current or past abuse of a child to the College will be responded to sensitively, respectfully, actively and in a timely manner.

The Board and leadership teams of St Michael's College are committed to implementing and continually reviewing strategies, policies, practices and systems that support the achievement of a child safe culture. All employees, contractors, volunteers and visitors have a personal and collective responsibility to follow and uphold these approaches and act in the best interests of our children and young people to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide an overarching policy framework which guides and gives structure for St Michael's College to develop and implement procedures and policies which establish and maintain child safe environments.

Principles

St Michael's College seeks to:

1. Ensure all children and young people are protected and kept safe from harm and risk of harm through:
 - Legislative requirements;
 - Professional duty of care;
 - Pastoral care.
2. Promote safeguarding children and young people as everyone's responsibility.
3. Build a culture which prioritises and maintains safe environments for all through policy compliance and review for continuous improvement.
4. Provide children and young people with opportunities to be heard and participate in the life of the College.
5. Acknowledge and respond to the particular needs of children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including children with disability and children of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage.
6. Communicate our commitment of being a Child Safe Organisation with zero tolerance to any form of harm, risk of harm or abuse related trauma.
7. Plan for safe, open and supportive environments and identify any areas of risk.
8. Deliver relevant safeguarding training, education programs and provide guidance to those with roles which engage children and young people.
9. Develop and implement protective systems and safe transparent practices which are both preventative and responsive.
10. Raise, report and respond appropriately to all signs, indicators of harm, risk of harm and abuse including disclosures and concerns of inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people.



Scope

This policy applies to all St Michael's College employees, contractors, volunteers and visitors.

Responsibilities

St Michael's College is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of procedures and practices which demonstrate a safe environment for all and work collaboratively to ensure effective achievement of a Child Safe Organisation. St Michael's College is also responsible for appropriately responding to any allegations or concerns relating to the abuse or safety of a child or young person (including historical matters) in accordance with the requirements applicable Legislation and Supporting Documents as in place from time to time. For more information or to raise a concern, please contact the Executive Assistant on (08) 8356 5966 or email child.safeguarding@smc.sa.edu.au

All employees, contractors, volunteers and visitors are responsible for:

- Helping to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children and promoting respectful relationships to support the dignity of each child and young person.
- Holding a current Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide, Department of Human Services Working With Children Check facilitated by the Screening and Verification Authority.
- Participating in mandatory notification training and relevant education which assists to safeguard children and young people.
- Reporting and responding in culturally appropriate ways to children and young people who disclose or show signs that they are experiencing harm or are at risk of harm.
- Adhering to codes of conduct and Best Practice Guidelines which establish standards of behaviour and practices, including the principles of this policy.

General Definitions¹ *in accordance with the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017:*

Anyone under the age of 18 is classified as a 'child or young person'.

'At Risk' A child or young person is considered to be at risk if the child or young person has suffered harm, is likely to suffer harm, or is likely to be removed from the State for the purpose of an unlawful medical procedure, to be married or take part in an illegal activity. A child or young person will be taken at risk if their parent or guardian are unable or unwilling to care for them, or if the child or young person is persistently absent from school without explanation, homeless or at no fixed address.

Harm Physical harm or psychological harm, whether caused by an act or omission, includes such harm caused by sexual, physical, mental or emotional abuse or neglect.

¹*Safe Environments for Children and Young People – Through their eyes, Government of South Australia, Department of Human Services*



Following are types of abuse-related trauma:

Sexual Abuse Any sexual activity or behaviour that is imposed on a child or young person by someone else. Sexual abuse occurs when someone in a position of power uses that power to involve the child or young person in sexual activity.

Grooming When a person tries to form a bond or a friendship with a child, to gain their trust and create opportunities to start, maintain and hide their sexual abuse of the victim.

Physical Abuse The child has suffered or is at significant risk of suffering serious physical trauma or inflicted injury due to the actions of their caregiver. An injury is considered 'inflicted' if it was alleged to be caused wilfully or as a result of punishment.

Psychological/Emotional Harm The child's social, emotional, or cognitive development is impaired or seriously at risk as a direct result of persistent caregiver behaviour or attitude towards the child, whereby the child's self-esteem and social competence are undermined or eroded over time. This includes the witnessing of domestic and family violence, hearing it or being exposed to the consequences of emotions post violence.

Neglect Characterised by serious, ongoing failure to provide for a child's basic needs, to the extent that the child's development, safety and well-being are at risk.

Review

This policy will be reviewed initially in the first 12 months then every three years and monitored in regard to the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide Child Protection Council.

Legislation

Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 and the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016

Supporting Documents:

- Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide: Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- National Catholic Safeguarding Standards
- Reporting Harm of Children and Young People Procedure (CESA)
- Protective Practices (SAGovt, CESA, AISSA)
- Charter for Staff in Catholic Schools South Australia (CESA)
- Code of Conduct (CESA)
- Duty of Care Policy (CESA)
- Duty of Care Procedure (CESA)
- Responding to problem sexual behaviour in children and young people (SAGovt, CESA, AISSA)
- Managing allegations of sexual misconduct in SA education and care settings (SAGovt, CESA, AISSA)
- St Michael's College Privacy Policy

REVISION RECORD

Approval Authority: Principal / College Board

Reviewed: May 2022

Next Review: May 2023