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Child Protection and Safety Policy

At Mount St. Joseph Girls' College we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of our 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 to Child Safety**). Celebrating and affirming all young people in the Charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart, we value the dignity and individuality of each person in our community and seek to live in a community guided by justice and fairness for all.

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 school (Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, n. 9).

Mount St. Joseph Girls' College has developed the following Child Protection and Safety Policy. This policy is an overarching document that provides key elements of our approach to protecting children from abuse.

The policy forms the foundation of the College's procedures, practices, decision-making processes and ultimately the College's culture with respect to child safety.

It is designed to be communicated through our public website as well as through other mediums such as newsletters, our annual report and in induction and welcome packs for Mount St. Joseph Girls' College – Altona West Board members, staff and volunteers. A PDF version of Mount St. Joseph Girls' College's Child Protection and Safety Policy is available [here](#).

The College's Child Protection and Safety Policy has been approved and endorsed by the Mount St. Joseph Girls' College – Altona West Board and is regularly reviewed by the Board.

Our Child Protection and Safety Policy

Objectives

This policy provides the framework for:

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

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Child abuse includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect and a child's exposure to family violence. Mount St. Joseph Girls' College is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse and demonstrates this commitment through the implementation of a comprehensive Child Protection Program designed to keep children safe.

At Mount St. Joseph Girls' College we have a zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The College regards its child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture.

Our commitment to our students

- We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all students enrolled in our school.
- We commit to providing students with positive and experiences.
- We commit to listening and empowering students.
- We commit to taking action to ensure that students are protected from abuse or harm.
- We commit to teaching students the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing.
- We commit to seeking input and feedback from students regarding the creation of a safe school environment.

Our commitment to parents and carers

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

Our commitment to our school staff (school employees, volunteers, contractors, religious women, Board members and clergy)

- We commit to providing all Mount St. Joseph Girls' College staff with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles. This will include regular and appropriate learning opportunities.
- 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 Protection and Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct, and staff responsibilities to report concerns.
- We commit to listening to all concerns voiced by Mount St. Joseph Girls' College staff, religious women, clergy, volunteers, and contractors about keeping children and young people safe from harm.
- We commit to providing opportunities for Mount St. Joseph Girls' College employees, volunteers, contractors, religious women and clergy to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of students if directly involved.

Child Safe Values & 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 they are safe and feel safe.

The College'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.

1. All children have the right to be safe.
2. The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
3. The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected.
4. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Safety Code of Conduct and Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy.
5. The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.

6. Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our College community.
7. 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.
8. Procedures are in place to screen all staff, **Direct Contact Volunteers**** Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers who have direct contact with children.
9. Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
10. Child protection training is mandatory for all Mount St. Joseph Girls' College – Altona West Board members, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers.
11. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the College community.
12. All persons involved in situations where harm is suspected or disclosed must be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect.
13. 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.
14. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.
15. Confidentiality will be maintained, with information being provided to those who have a right or a need to be informed, either legally or pastorally.

****Direct Contact Volunteers** are those volunteers who are involved in providing support, guidance and supervision directly to students and could potentially have direct contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service.

The Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic) defines '**direct contact**' as any contact between a person and a child (aged under 18) that involves:

- physical contact; or
- face to face contact; or
- contact by post or other written communication; or
- contact by telephone or other oral communication; or
- contact by email or other electronic communication.

Child Protection Program

Mount St. Joseph Girls' College is committed to the effective implementation of our Child Protection Program and ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated. We adopt a risk management approach by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety risks based on a range of factors including the nature of our College's activities, physical and online environments and the characteristics of the student body.

Our Child Protection Program relates to all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse. It includes:

- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and associated key risk indicators;
- clear procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse;
- strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, parents and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child protection matters;
- procedures for recruiting and screening Mount St. Joseph Girls' College – Altona West Board members, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers;
- procedures for reporting reportable conduct and/or misconduct;
- pastoral care strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe;
- policies with respect to cultural diversity and students with disabilities;
- a child protection training program;
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children;
- guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality;
- policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Victorian Child Safe Standards); and
- a system for continuous review and improvement.

As a part of Mount St. Joseph Girls' College's induction process, all staff, Board members and Direct Contact Volunteers are required to read and acknowledge their requirement to abide by the Child Protection and Safety Policy and Code of Conduct annually.

All staff are provided with additional, ongoing child protection training at least annually.

Staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers are supported and supervised by the College's **Child Safety Officers** to ensure that they are compliant with the College's approach to child protection.

Responsibilities

Child protection is everyone's responsibility. At Mount St. Joseph Girls' College all members of the Mount St. Joseph Girls' College – Altona West Board and staff, as well as Volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. Specific responsibilities include:

Mount St. Joseph Girls' College – Altona West Board

Each member of the Mount St. Joseph Girls' College – Altona West Board is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the College's Child Protection and Safety Policy and the Child Protection Program to be effectively implemented within the College and are responsible for holding the Principal and stewardship team accountable for effective implementation.

The Principal

The Principal is responsible, and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Protection and Safety Policy and the College's Child Protection Program are implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child protection culture is maintained within the College.

The College's Child Safety Officers

A number of senior staff members are nominated as the College's Child Safety Officers. Our Child Safety Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child protection issues. They are the first point of contact for raising child protection concerns within the College. They are also responsible for championing child protection within the College and assisting in coordinating responses to child protection incidents.

Staff Members

All staff are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the College's Child Safety Officers.

Direct Contact Volunteers

All Direct Contact Volunteers, as defined in this policy, are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy, our Child Protection Program and their

legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse.

It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the College's Child Safety Officers.

Indirect Contact Volunteers

Indirect Contact Volunteers (or 'Indirect Volunteers') are those volunteers who are involved in providing support and services whilst not directly assisting a specific group of students.

All Indirect Volunteers are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

All Indirect Volunteers are required by the College to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Safety Code of Conduct.

Examples of Indirect Contact Volunteer activities may include assisting with College administrative functions.

Third Party Contractors

All Third Party Contractors (service providers) engaged by the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

Third Party Contractors include, for example, maintenance and building personnel, consultants, casual teachers, tutors, sports coaches and college cleaners.

This also includes music teachers and other extra-curricular teachers and instructors who are engaged by students and their families directly, rather than the College, but have an agreement with the College to use the College's facilities.

Direct Contact Contractors

Direct Contact Contractors are:

- those who have direct contact** with students during the normal course of their work;
- those who may be in a position to establish a relationship of trust with a student notwithstanding that unsupervised access to students would be rare (for example full-time maintenance personnel); and
- any contractors whom a school is legally required to screen.

The Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic) defines 'direct contact' as any contact between a person and a child (aged under 18) that involves:

- physical contact; or
- face to face contact; or
- contact by post or other written communication; or
- contact by telephone or other oral communication; or
- contact by email or other electronic communication.

Indirect Contact Contractors

Indirect Contact Contractors are those contractors who do not meet the definition of "Direct Contact Contractor". Refer to **Third Party Contractors' Responsibilities** for more information.

All service providers engaged by the College are required by the College to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program.

The College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the service provider.

External Education Providers

An External Education Provider is any organisation that the College has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the College.

The delivery of such a course may take place on College premises or elsewhere.

All External Education Providers engaged by the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

All External Education Providers engaged by the College are required by the College to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program.

Mount St. Joseph Girls' College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the External Education Provider.

Student Safety and Participation

At Mount St. Joseph Girls' College 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.

Reporting Child Protection Concerns

Our Child Protection Program provides detailed guidance for members of the Mount St. Joseph Girls' College – Altona West 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 College's nominated Child Safety Officers. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.

Staff, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, Volunteers, students, parents/guardians and other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse or grooming are asked to contact the College's Child Safety Officers, **Steven Mifsud and Stacey Bourke**, by phoning **(03) 8398 2046 or 03 8398 2017** or emailing **childsafety@msjvic.edu.au**.

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

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.

Related Policies and Procedures

- Risk Management Program
- Compliance Program
- Student Duty of Care Program
- Occupational Health & Safety Program
- Child Protection Staff Training
- Recruitment & Selection Procedures
- Induction Procedures

Policy & Program Review

Mount St. Joseph Girls' College 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.