



# ST MARY'S COLLEGE

## CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFETY POLICY

*Child Safe Standard 2: Clear commitment to Child Safety*

### **Context**

St Mary's College Melbourne\* is a Catholic school for girls and boys in the Edmund Rice tradition, established as Christian Brothers' College St Kilda in 1878. St Mary's College is committed to providing a caring, supportive and safe environment where every student has a place, a voice and their story is known. As a Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition, our Christian values are those expressed in the Touchstones of our governing body, Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA): Liberating Education, Gospel Spirituality, Inclusive Community, Justice and Solidarity. The charism of Blessed Edmund Rice expressed through these touchstones, underpins our continued commitment to a safe and inclusive environment for all, providing a preferential option to those at the margins, to grow in empathy and to respond in faith and action.

### **Background**

EREA, as St Mary's College's governing authority, sets the policy framework for all EREA schools. These policies have been contextualised for St Mary's College's particular school environment so that our policies reflect the needs of our students.

### **Rationale**

St Mary's 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 published on our public website as well as communicated through other mediums such as our annual report and in induction and welcome packs for College Board members, staff and volunteers.

The College's Child Protection and Safety Policy has been approved and endorsed by EREA and is regularly reviewed by the Board.

*See also the [EREA Child Protection Policy](#) and [EREA Commitment Statement to Child Safety](#).*

## 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
- compliance with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection in Victoria.

## Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

St Mary's College is committed to providing a child safe and child friendly environment, where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and are able to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.

At St Mary's 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.

## Child Safe Values and Principles

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 College Child Safety Code of Conduct and the EREA Child Safe Code of Conduct.
5. The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.
6. Child safety awareness is promoted in our College community.
7. Procedures are in place to screen all staff, direct contact volunteers\*\*, third party contractors and external education providers who have direct contact with children.
8. Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
9. Child protection training is mandatory for all College Board Members, staff and direct contact volunteers.
10. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the College community.
11. 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.
12. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

*\*\*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 years) that involves:*

- *Physical contact;*
- *Face to face contact;*
- *Contact by post or other written communication;*
- *Contact by telephone or other oral communication; or*
- *Contact by email or other electronic communication.*

*Examples of Direct Contact Volunteer activities may include volunteers involved in College camps and excursions, coaching sporting teams or assisting in learning activities.*

*See also the [EREA Commitment Statement to Child Safety](#).*

## **Child Protection Program**

St Mary's 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/carers and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child protection matters;
- Procedures for recruiting and screening College Board members, staff, direct contact volunteers, third party contractors and external education providers;
- 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);
- A system for continuous review and improvement.

As part of St Mary's College's induction process, all staff and direct contact volunteers are required to complete a selection of training modules on the content of our Child Protection Program.

Additional, ongoing child protection training is provided 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**

Meeting the requirements of 'Ministerial Order No. 870 – Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools', is the direct responsibility of St Mary's College's governing body, Edmund Rice Education Australia, and the College Principal.

At St Mary's College child protection is everyone's responsibility. At St Mary's College, the College Board and staff, as well as volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children.

Specific responsibilities include:

### Edmund Rice Education Australia

EREA is responsible for approving our Child Protection Program and ensuring that the College has appropriate resources to effectively implement our Child Protection Program.

### EREA Regional Director

The EREA Regional Director supports and advises the Principal in relation to EREA policy and guidelines, relevant child protection legislation and the implementation of the College's child protection program.

### The Principal

The Principal is responsible, and will be accountable for, the operational management of the College, and the Child Protection Program. The Principal is responsible 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.

### College Advisory Board

Under the EREA governance structure, the College Board is responsible for working collaboratively with the Principal to ensure consistency and faithfulness to the Charter for Catholic Schools in the Edmund Rice Tradition and the Touchstones of Liberating Education, Gospel Spirituality, Inclusive Community, and Justice and Solidarity. As part of this role, the Board has responsibility for approving major College policies that are consistent with EREA policies.

### The College's Child Safety Officers

A number of staff members have been nominated as the College's Child Safety Officers. Our Child Safety Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child protection issues. They can be a point of contact for raising child protection concerns within the College. They are also responsible for championing child protection within the College.

The Deputy Principal has been appointed as our Senior Child Safety Officer. The Senior Child Safety Officer is responsible for the overall promotion and maintenance of a child protection culture at the College.

### 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 the Principal or Deputy Principal, and/or one of the College's Child Safety Officers. Where the concern relates to the Principal or Deputy Principal, report to the EREA Regional Director via the EREA National Office at (03) 9426 3200.

### Direct Contact Volunteers\*\*

All Direct Contact Volunteers, as defined in this policy, are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection Program, particularly this Child Protection and Safety Policy, the St Mary's College Child Safety Code of Conduct and the EREA Child Safe Code of Conduct, 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 the Principal or Deputy Principal, and one of the College's Child Safety Officers, Where the concern relates to the Principal or Deputy Principal, report to the EREA Regional Director via the EREA National Office at (03) 9426 3200.

### Indirect Contact Volunteers

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

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

All Indirect Contact Volunteers are required by the College to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy, the St Mary's College Child Safety Code of Conduct and the EREA Child Safe Code of Conduct.

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

### Third Party Contractors

All Third Party Contractors 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 the 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.

All Third Party Contractors engaged by the College are required by the College to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy, the St Mary's College Child Safety Code of Conduct and the EREA Child Safe Code of Conduct.

The College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the Third Party Contractors.

### 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, the St Mary's College Child Safety Code of Conduct and the EREA Child Safe Code of Conduct.

St Mary's College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the External Education Provider.

### **Reporting Child Abuse Concerns**

Our Child Protection Program provides detailed guidance for the College 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 the Principal or Deputy Principal, and one of our College's nominated Child Safety Officers. Where the concern relates to the Principal or Deputy Principal, report to the EREA Regional Director via the EREA National Office at (03) 9426 3200.

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/carers and other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse or grooming, are asked to contact the College's Senior Child Safety Officer, the Deputy Principal, by phoning (03) 9529 6611 or emailing [deputyprincipal@stmaryscollege.vic.edu.au](mailto:deputyprincipal@stmaryscollege.vic.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.

### **Policy and Program Review**

St Mary's 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.

### **Review**

Approved by CBC St Kilda Advisory Board:	24 April 2020
Reviewed and approved by EREA Board:	7 August 2020
Date of next policy review by the College:	March 2021

### **References**

- St Mary's College Child Safety Code of Conduct
- [EREA Child Safe Code of Conduct](#)
- [EREA Child Protection Policy](#)
- [EREA Commitment Statement to Child Safety](#)
- [Ministerial Order No. 870 – Child Safe Standards](#)
- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)