



Santa Maria College

Child Safety Policy

Person Responsible:

Joanne Rock - College Principal

Sandra Finnegan - Compliance Leader

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Contents

Introduction	3
Purpose of the Policy	3
Principles	3
Definitions used in this Policy	4
Policy Commitments	5
Responsibilities and Organisational Arrangements	6
6.1 Guide to Responsibilities of School Leadership	6
6.2 Guide to Responsibilities of College Staff	7
6.3 Organisational Arrangements	7
Expectation of our College Staff – Child Safety Code of Conduct	9
Student Safety and Participation	9
Reporting and Responding	10
RESPONDING TO A REPORT OF A COLLEGE INCIDENT	10
STEP 1 - RECEIPT and RECORDING of INCIDENT	10
STEP 2 - SELECTION AND CONFIRMATION OF APPROPRIATE ACTION	11
STEP 3 - IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PLAN	11
STEP 4 - RESOLUTION AND RECORD KEEPING	12
Screening and Recruitment of School Staff	12
Child Safety – Education and Training for College Staff	12
Risk Management	13
Relevant Legislation	13
Related Policies	13
14.1 Melbourne Archdioceses Catholic Schools Policies	13
14.2 School Policies	14
Breach of Policy	14
Review of this Child Safety Policy	14
References	14

1. Introduction

At Santa Maria College we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of our College. 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 Statement to Child Safety](#)).

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).

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the strong commitment of Santa Maria College to the care, safety and wellbeing of all students at our College. It provides an outline of the policies, procedures and strategies developed to keep students safe from harm, including all forms of abuse in our school 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](#).

This policy applies to College staff, including College employees, volunteers and contractors.

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 they are safe and feel safe ([CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety](#)).

The following principles underpin our commitment to child safety at Santa Maria College:

- All students deserve, as a fundamental right, safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect.
- Our College 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 adults in our College, including teaching and non-teaching staff, volunteers, and contractors, 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 and children and young people.

- Policies and practices demonstrate compliance with legislative requirements and cooperation 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.
- Staff, volunteers, contractors, parents and students should feel free to raise concerns about child safety, knowing these will be taken seriously by the College Leadership Team.
- 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 the College.

Child abuse includes:

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

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

- (a) a campus of the school
- (b) online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- (c) other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events). ([Ministerial Order No. 870](#))

School staff means an individual working in a school 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](#))

5. Policy Commitments

All students enrolled at Santa Maria College have the right to feel safe and be safe. The wellbeing of students 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 students are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety. There is particular attention paid to the most vulnerable students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and students with a disability.

Our commitment to our students

- (a) We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people enrolled in our school.
- (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 students regarding the creation of a safe school environment.

Our commitment to parents and carers

- (a) We commit to communicating honestly and openly with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children.
- (b) We commit to engaging with, and listening to, the views of parents and carers about our child-safety practice, 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 school staff (school employees, volunteers and contractors)

- (a) We commit to providing all Santa Maria College 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 Santa Maria College staff, volunteers, and contractors about keeping children and young people safe from harm.
- (d) We commit to providing opportunities for Santa Maria College employees, volunteers, and contractors to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.

6. Responsibilities and Organisational Arrangements

All Santa Maria College staff, including volunteers, 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 school has allocated roles and responsibilities for child safety as follows.

6.1 Guide to Responsibilities of College Leadership

The principal, the school governing authority and school leaders at Santa Maria College 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 staff, volunteers, and contractors

- 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 staff 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 College takes specific action to protect children from abuse in line with the three new criminal offences introduced under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.) and in line with the [PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#).

6.2 Guide to Responsibilities of College Staff

Responsibilities of College staff (employees, volunteers and contractors) 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

At Santa Maria College we have Child Safety Officer roles. The roles are held by Carolyn McCarthy, Deputy Principal - Learning and Life and Sandra Finnegan, Compliance Leader.

The Child Safety Officer role includes the following responsibilities:

- Provide authoritative advice
 - Act as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of child safety.
 - Liaise with the principal and school leaders to maintain the visibility of child safety.
 - Lead the development of the school's child safety culture, including being a child safety champion and providing coordination in communicating, implementing, monitoring, enhancing and reporting on strategies to embed a culture of child safety.
- Raise awareness
 - Ensure the College's policies are known and used appropriately.

- Ensure the College's child safety policy is reviewed in the context of College self-evaluation undertaken as part of the College accountability framework.
- Ensure the child protection policy is available publicly and parents are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the College in this.
- Be alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers.
- Encourage among all staff a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings in any measures to protect them.
- Provide professional development for staff
 - Being authoritative in providing advice by:
 - Maintaining skills through appropriate training carried out every two years
 - Having a working knowledge of how the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Community Service Organisations conduct a child protection case conference to be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so.
 - Be able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals.
 - Ensure each member of staff has access to and understands the College's child safety policy and procedures, especially new and part time staff.
 - Make sure staff are aware of training opportunities and the latest DHHS and DET policies and guidance.

Other roles and responsibilities throughout the College are as follows:

Role	Responsibilities
Acting College Principal (Jan-July 2021)	Maintain a professional understanding of changes to Child Safe Obligation and communicate these to relevant parties Communicate with governing authorities the actions of the College in relation to compliance to Child Safe standards
College Principal - July 2021 - Feb 2023	Oversee recruitment Participate in staff induction and training Maintain staff files Implement whole College strategies to fully implement Child Safe standards (eg: building works) Be involved (as required) in any grievance process
Acting College Principal (Jan-July 2021)	Assume the role of Child Safety Officer Be involved (as required) in any grievance process Support staff in professional learning to comply with Child Safe standards
Deputy Principal - Learning and Life - July 2021 - Feb 2023	Oversee induction of staff and volunteers Maintain student files Create and implement curriculum programs to meet Standard 7 - empowerment Work with Compliance Leader to ensure visibility of child safe compliance Any other duties as requested by the Principal Support staff filing any report to external bodies (eg: DHHS, Child First, Emergency Services)

Compliance Leader	<p>Assume the role of Child Safety Officer</p> <p>Be involved (as required) in any grievance process</p> <p>Maintain records of staff compliance via training and registration (eg: WWCC)</p> <p>Encourage ongoing professional learning for all staff in the area of Child Safety</p> <p>Work with Deputy Principal - Learning and Life to ensure visibility of child safe compliance</p> <p>Maintain register of risk through Complispace database</p> <p>Liaise with external providers to gather evidence of WWCC or equivalent</p>
Village Leaders	<p>Be aware and comply with Child Safe policies and practices within the College</p> <p>Be aware and comply with their professional responsibilities in relation to reported suspected abuse</p> <p>http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf</p> <p>Work with staff who have been made aware of abuse by supporting documentation of report and communication processes</p> <p>Communicate with DP-Learning and Life any report</p>
Subject Teachers	<p>Be aware and comply with Child Safe policies and practices within the College</p> <p>Be aware and comply with their professional responsibilities in relation to reported suspected abuse</p> <p>http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf</p>
Support staff	<p>Be aware and comply with Child Safe policies and practices within the College</p> <p>Be aware and comply with their professional responsibilities in relation to reported suspected abuse</p> <p>http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf</p>

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

At Santa Maria College community, we expect employees, volunteers and contractors 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 staff play in protecting the students in our care and establishes clear expectations of College employees, volunteers and contractors 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.

8. Student Safety and Participation

At Santa Maria 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.

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.) and the recommendations of the [Betrayal of Trust](#) report.

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

Our College's [Child Protection – Reporting Policy](#), which is current in February 2021, sets out the actions required under the relevant legislation when there is a reasonable belief that a child at our school is in need of protection or a criminal offence has been committed, and provides guidance and procedures on how to make a report.

Our policy assists staff, volunteers and families to:

- identify the indicators of a child or young person who may be in need of protection
- 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.

RESPONDING TO A REPORT OF A COLLEGE INCIDENT

This process should be enacted for all student, staff and parent concerns on any matter within the College.

STEP 1 - RECEIPT and RECORDING of INCIDENT

	Personnel	Action	Timeliness	Record Keeping
1	Staff member receives communication	Inform Village Leader of communication	Within 1 working day of receiving information	Staff member to record conversations in personal log

2	Deputy Principal - Learning and Life	Email incident form to affected person and CC staff member in email	Within 1 working day of receiving information	Email record
3	Village Leader	Liaise with Deputy Principal to triage incident and delegate Principal nominee in responding to incident	Within 1 working day of receiving information	
4	Person actioning incident process (parent, student, staff)	Complete and submit incident form		
5	Principal nominee	Forward incident form to Principal and affected staff member. Acknowledge receipt of incident form via email	Within 1 working day of receiving information	Email record
6	Principal	Place incident form on Principal drive	Within one week of receiving information	Form placed on staff file

STEP 2 - SELECTION AND CONFIRMATION OF APPROPRIATE ACTION

	Personnel	Action	Timeliness	Record Keeping
1	Principal Nominee	Meeting with DP/ Principal (as required) and completion of action plan template	Within 3 working days of receipt of incident	Action plan to be placed with Principal notes
2	Principal Nominee	Report of action plan to Principal (as required)		
3	Principal Nominee	Communication with affected persons about action plan and timeline for action (include action plan in email alongside communication)	Within 5 working days of receipt of incident	Email record

STEP 3 - IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PLAN

	Personnel	Action	Timeliness	Record Keeping
1	Principal Nominee	Complete agreed upon actions from action plan	As required	Notes to be kept by Principal nominee on action plan

2	Principal Nominee	Weekly communication of stages of action plan and progress	Ongoing weekly communication throughout action plan	Email record of weekly communication
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STEP 4 - RESOLUTION AND RECORD KEEPING

	Personnel	Action	Timeliness	Record Keeping
1	Principal Nominee	Final resolution meeting with affected parties, highlighting completion of action plan	As required	Signature of all parties on completed action plan
2	Principal Affected parties	Signature on action plan as resolved	Within 5 working days of conclusion of action plan	Remain on file of student/ staff

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

[Complaints Policy](#)

10. Screening and Recruitment of School Staff

Santa Maria 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 school'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.

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

Santa Maria College provides employees and volunteers with regular and appropriate opportunities to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters. This includes

induction, ongoing training 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.

All new and returning staff must attend a Child Safe Induction session early in their first term at the College. All Casual Relief Teachers (CRTs) and parent volunteers must attend our mandatory Induction session, including Child Safe Induction, and agree to our Child Safe Code of Conduct before gaining any casual work at the College.

12. Risk Management

At Santa Maria College we are committed to proactively and systematically identifying and assessing risks to student safety across our whole school 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.

13. Relevant Legislation

- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.)
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic)
- *Working with Children Act 2005* (Vic.)
- *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 Melbourne Archdioceses Catholic Schools Policies

- [CECV Guidelines Relating to the Employment of Staff](#)
- [Policy 2.19: Child Protection – Reporting Obligations](#)
- [Roles and Responsibilities – Complaints Handling](#)
- [Policy 2.26: Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools](#)

- [MACS Guidelines for Behaviour Support](#)
- [CECV Positive Behaviour Guidelines](#)

14.2 School Policies

[Child Safe Code of Conduct](#)

[Complaints Policy](#) - update

[Digital Agreement](#)

15. Breach of Policy

Where an **employee** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this Policy, Santa Maria College 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 Board, Fiona Leahy. Relevant notification should also be made to Melbourne Archdioceses Catholic Schools (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 and/or contact Melbourne Archdioceses Catholic Schools (Office of Professional Conduct, Ethics and Investigation).

16. Review of this Child Safety Policy

At Santa Maria College 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)
January 2019	Updated links, checked policy, maintained relevant documents
February 2021	Updated links, checked MACS policy, maintained relevant documents

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) 2018, [*Victorian Catholic Education Multi Enterprise Agreement 2018*](#), CECV.

Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, [*The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*](#), Vatican.

Department of Education, 2018, [*PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools*](#)

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.

Parliament of Victoria, Family and Community Development Committee, 2013, [*Betrayal of Trust*](#)