



## CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFETY POLICY

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

St Francis Xavier College is committed to complying with [Ministerial Order 870: Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools](#), and following the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

St. Francis Xavier College operates under the governance of the Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Ltd (DOSCEL).

St Francis Xavier College employees therefore have a duty of care to students during school operating hours and at other times when an employee/student relationship exists. Employees fulfil this duty by taking reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions which they can reasonably foresee would be likely to result in harm or injury to a student.

Protecting children is everyone's responsibility – parents, communities, governments and business all have a role to play. In Victoria, a joint protocol exists to protect the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, involving:

- the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing ('DFFH') Child Protection;
- the Department of Education and Training ('DET');
- licensed children's services; and
- Victorian schools, including Catholic schools.

For the purposes of this joint protocol, acting in the best interests of the child or young person includes:

- reporting to Child Protection all allegations or disclosures of abuse: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, grooming and witnessing or experiencing family violence;
- reporting to Child Protection when a belief is formed that a child or young person has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed;
- making the child or young person's ongoing safety and wellbeing the primary focus of decision-making;
- sharing appropriate information, expertise and resources with other service providers supporting the child or young person;
- protecting and promoting the cultural and spiritual identity of a child or young person and maintaining their connection to their family or community of origin;
- enabling the child or young person and the child or young person's family to access appropriate services in order to reduce the long-term effects of abuse or neglect.

## 2.0 PURPOSE

St Francis Xavier College is committed to child protection strategies and procedures to ensure the care, safety and protection of all children and young people at the College.

This document is to provide guidance to maximise the safety and protection of students in the College

The document sets out the procedures to be followed to ensure that prompt, professional, sensitive and appropriate action is taken by employees in St Francis Xavier College.

## 3.0 PRINCIPLES

In the best interest of the child or young person, the child protection strategies and procedures to be followed are based on the following principles:

- 3.1 Every child and young person has the right to be safe.
- 3.2 Recognition of the diversity of all children and young people, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and young people, children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with disabilities and vulnerabilities.
- 3.3 School environments are safe, supportive, inclusive and empowering.
- 3.4 School communities are dedicated to the protection and safety of all children and young people as reflected in the [DOSCEL Commitment Statement to Child Safety](#).
- 3.5 All employees in Catholic schools have a responsibility to care for children and young people and to promote their safety, protection and wellbeing.
- 3.6 All children and young people have the right to a thorough and systematic education in all aspects of personal safety, in partnership with their parents/guardians/carers.
- 3.7 In any dealings regarding safety, the dignity, protection and wellbeing of students involved will be maintained and respected.
- 3.8 The Principal will ensure all employees adhere to legislation and policies with respect to child protection.
- 3.9 Appropriate confidentiality is maintained, with information being provided to those who have a right or a need to be informed, either legally or pastorally.

## 4.0 DEFINITIONS

**Abuse:** Any non-accidental behaviour by parents, carers, other adults, siblings or older adolescents that is outside the norms of conduct and entails a substantial risk of causing physical or emotional harm to a child or young person. Such behaviours may be intentional or unintentional and can include acts of omission (neglect) and commission (abuse). Abuse is commonly divided into five main subtypes:

- Physical abuse – the intentional use of physical force against a child or young person that results in, or has a high likelihood of resulting in, harm for the child or young person’s health, survival, development or dignity. This includes hitting, beating, kicking, shaking, biting, strangling, scalding, burning, poisoning and suffocating. Much physical violence against children or young people is inflicted with the object of punishing.

- Emotional abuse – refers to a parent, carer or other adult’s inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts towards a child or young person and/or a pattern of failure over time to provide a child or young person with adequate non-physical nurturing and emotional availability. Such acts of commission or omission are likely to damage a child or young person's self-esteem or social competence.
- Neglect – includes both isolated incidents, as well as a pattern of failure over time, on the part of a parent, family member or other adult, to provide for the development and wellbeing of a child or young person, where the parent, family member or other adult is in a position to do so in one or more of the following areas:
  - health
  - education
  - emotional development
  - nutrition
  - shelter and safe living conditions.
- Sexual abuse – the involvement of a child or young person in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society. Children or young people can be sexually abused by both adults and other children who are, by virtue of their age or stage of development, in a position of responsibility, trust or power over the victim.
- Exposure to family violence – forcing a child or young person to live in an environment where there is sustained violence, inclusive of emotional and psychological abuse.

**Bullying:** repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons. Bullying may involve cyberbullying, which refers to bullying through information and communication technologies. Conflicts or fights between equals and single incidents are not defined as bullying.

**Child Protection:** Statutory services designed to protect children who are at risk of serious harm.

**Duty of Care:** is an element of the law of negligence. In broad terms, the law of negligence provides that if a person suffers injury as the result of a negligent act or omission of another, the injured person should be compensated for loss and damage flowing from that negligence.

**Mandatory Reporting:** The legal requirement to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect is known as mandatory reporting. Mandated persons in DOSCEL include registered teachers, school principals, school counsellors, registered psychologists and people in religious ministry.

## 5.0 PROCESS

- 5.1 St Francis Xavier College will use the [Child Safe Standards](#) to establish and embed a Child Protection Program which sets out in detail the policies, procedures and workplace systems it has adopted.
- 5.2 All St Francis Xavier College staff who identify concerns regarding the sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect of a child or young person must respond

according to Mandatory Reporting, Grooming, Failure to Disclose and Failure to Protect legislation and policies.

- 5.3 When an allegation is directed against a DOSCEL employee (employed at St. Francis Xavier College or the Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Sale), or a DOSCEL volunteer or contractor, the reporting person is to inform the Executive Manager: Industrial Relations / Human Resources, in addition to following other reporting requirements.
- 5.4 Allegations directed against any clergy or members of religious institutes should be reported to Victoria Police and the Bishop of the Diocese, via the Director of Catholic Education, Diocese of Sale. The reporting person(s) must also fulfil other relevant requirements, including but not limited to mandatory reporting.
- 5.5 The Principal shall ensure that school employees receive induction and ongoing professional learning in relation to the child safety and protection policies, inclusive of mandatory reporting, on an annual and ongoing basis.
- 5.6 The Principal shall ensure the school's pastoral care structures reflect all child safety and protection policies and procedures.
- 5.7 All employees, including volunteers and contractors, will be required to follow the St Francis Xavier College Code of Conduct.
- 5.8 For further guidance, refer to documents developed in consultation with the Victorian State Government, Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, Independent Schools Victoria and the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority.

For example:

- [PROTECT - Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [PROTECT – Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
- [FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#)

## 6.0 STRATEGIES TO REDUCE OR REMOVE THE RISK

### 6.1 Embedding a Culture of Child Safety – Prevention

The care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people is a central and fundamental responsibility of Catholic education. All students enrolled at the College, and any child visiting, have a right to feel safe and be safe. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we have zero tolerance to child abuse. We aim to create 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 reconciliation**

St Francis Xavier College acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First People and Traditional Custodians. We are proud and fortunate to live and serve on the land of the Bunnerong and Wurundjeri people. We recognise their intelligence, care and stewardship of this land for many generations. We pay respect to their elders, past, present and emerging. We commit ourselves to moving forward in a spirit of reconciliation.

#### **We welcome all people with unconditional respect**

St Francis Xavier College acknowledges the dignity and value of every person, believing that we are made in the image of God. We are committed to embracing diversity and eliminating systems, practices and beliefs that exclude, divide or disadvantage people. St Francis Xavier College welcomes

people of all ability, colour, culture, faith, financial circumstance, gender identity and sexual orientation.

### **We create safe school culture**

St Francis Xavier College is committed to creating a child safe community. We work proactively to prevent any form of abuse or bullying and will respond with compassion and care if concerns are raised. We intentionally build a culture which promotes the safety and wellbeing of all members of our community.

### **Policy and Procedures**

St. Francis Xavier College operates under the governance of the Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Ltd (DOSCEL) and operates in accordance with the Delegations Register. All policies of St Francis Xavier College are developed by DOSCEL. The role of schools in the Diocese is to implement the policies reflecting local leadership roles and develop processes and procedures for the implementation of the DOSCEL policies, including Child Protection policies.

### **Child Protection Program**

The College's Child Protection program has been incorporated into the Culture of the College and is evident in policy and practice and all aspects of College life.

It is evident in:

- The College Governing Authority procedures and practices
- The Wellbeing program for students, including specific Child Safe Training for students
- The Information Sessions offered to parents at Parent Focus Group Meetings and Parent Information Sessions
- Risk Management approach to all College Activities, Child Protection is always our number one consideration
- HR Practices, including advertising for staff, the interview process, induction and mentoring
- Ongoing professional learning program for all staff, including regular communication of the Child Protection process
- Standing agenda item in key committees of the College, Executive, Leadership, Resources and is the key focus for all meetings of the Student Wellbeing Leadership Team

### **Specific Training for those in a Governance Role in the College**

All members of the College Governing authority undertake Mandatory Reporting Training each year. They also participate in College Child Safety Training and receive specific role base training from the Deputy Principal: Mission and Compliance and the Assistant Principal: Wellbeing. They are all aware of their specific child safety responsibilities and reporting processes as Senior Leaders of the College.

### **Communication of Child Safety to the Wider Community**

The College ensures that our Child Safety program is communicated to the wider community in the following ways:

- College Web Site
- Child Protection Posters in all receptions and in sign in processes at each Campus
- Student Leadership Sessions
- Student Consultation and Advisory Groups
- Parent Focus Group Meetings
- Parent Information Evenings – including specific evenings addressing child protection and student wellbeing
- Promoted through College Social Media Platforms
- College Annual Report
- Parent Access Module in SIMON

- Advertisements for new staff
- Remote Learning Module
- Email communication to parents including the Child Friendly Version of the Child Safe Policy

## 6.2 Embedding a Culture of Child Safety – Response

### Child Protection Reporting Process

The College uses reporting process which supports staff through the process of reporting children protection concerns. This process includes outlining how to recognise signs of abuse, respond with care, refer people involved to get support, report to the relevant authorities and agencies, and record key information.

### Child Protection Officers

The College trains several staff who have an increased responsibility to embed child safer practices, to be familiar with child safe policies and procedures, and to support staff to recognise and respond to child protection concerns.

### Child Protection Record Keeping

The College uses a process for notification and record keeping so that key members of the leadership team who are responsible for the care of students are informed about child protection concerns and so that all records of child protection concerns are documented and stored in the College's information system.

## 7.0 EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- 7.1 All schools will ensure the care, safety and protection of all students.
- 7.2 St Francis Xavier College staff are informed of child safety and protection. They are expected to be self-aware and adhere to their professional obligations and responsibilities.
- 7.3 All allegations of abuse will be responded to promptly in line with this policy.

## 8.0 REFERENCES

- [\*Ministerial Order 870: Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools\*](#)
- [DOSCEL Commitment Statement to Child Safety](#)
- [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005](#) (Vic.)
- [PROTECT - Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [PROTECT – Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
- [FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#)
- DOSCEL Guide to Reporting Conduct under the Reportable Conduct Scheme
- DOSCEL Commitment Statement to Child Safety

## 9.0 REVIEW

**Implementation Date:** January 2021

**Review Date:** Feb 2022