



# Child Safety Policy

Saint Ignatius College Geelong  
*A Jesuit Partner School*



## *Child Safety Policy*

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## **1. Introduction**

At *Saint Ignatius College Geelong* we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of our school. Saint Ignatius College Geelong has zero tolerance of child abuse in any form and any associated allegations or instances will be treated very seriously – with actions up to and including involvement of the Police. Our commitment is drawn not only from the Victorian Child Safe Standards, but also from the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with 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 Saint Ignatius College Geelong to the care, safety and wellbeing of all students at our school including children of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities and children of any other diverse backgrounds.

It provides an outline of the policies, procedures and strategies developed to not only help all students to feel valued, but to also keep students safe from harm, including all forms of abuse in our school environment, on campus, online, in any other locations arranged by the school and in any adult – child interactions associated with 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 school staff, including school employees, volunteers, contractors, clergy, or any other persons involved with the school, as it may arise from time to time.

## **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 Saint Ignatius College Geelong:*

- All students deserve, as a fundamental right, safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect.
- 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.
- 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 school, including teaching and non-teaching staff, clergy, 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 open, honest, respectful and law-abiding relationships between adults, children and young people and are underpinned by relevant aspects of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Australia is a signatory.
- 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, clergy, volunteers, contractors, parents and students should feel free to raise concerns about child safety, knowing these will be taken seriously by school leadership.
- 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.
- If any child appears to be in imminent danger of abuse, or we have reason to believe that abuse is taking place, we will make every reasonable effort to remove that child from abuse and we will contact the Police 000.

#### ***4. Definitions used in this Policy***

***Child:*** A child or a young person enrolled as a student at the school and/or less than 18 years old.

***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:*** The failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and wellbeing. (*Safe Schools Hub*) (NB: In the event that the parent or caregiver cannot provide adequately for the child, they must make every reasonable effort to seek the support to do so.)

***Child physical abuse:*** Generally, child physical abuse refers to the non-accidental use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Physically abusive behaviours include, but are not necessarily limited to, shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning. The fabrication or induction of an illness by a parent or carer (previously known as Munchausen syndrome by proxy) is also considered physically abusive behaviour.

(*Safe Schools Hub*)

***Child protection:*** Statutory services designed to protect children who are at risk of serious harm. (*Safe Schools Hub*)



**Child sexual abuse:** When a person involves the child in sexual activity, or deliberately puts the child in the presence of sexual behaviours that are exploitative or inappropriate to his/her age and development. Child sexual abuse can involve a range of sexual activity including fondling, masturbation, penetration, voyeurism and exhibitionism. It can also include exposure to or exploitation through pornography or prostitution, as well as grooming behavior. (*The Child Safe Standards*)

Child sexual abuse can also include:

- any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult, where the adult is in a position of power or authority over the child (e.g. a teacher); age of consent laws do not apply in such instances due to the strong imbalance of power, as well as the breaching of both personal and public trust that occurs when professional boundaries are violated.
- any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult family member, regardless of issues of consent, equality or coercion.
- sexual activity between peers that is non-consensual or involves the use of power or coercion.
- non-consensual sexual activity between minors (e.g. a 14-year-old and an 11-year-old), or any sexual behaviour between a child and another child or adolescent who, due to their age or stage of development, is in a position of power, trust or responsibility over the victim.

Sexual activity between adolescents at a similar developmental level is not considered abuse. (*Safe Schools Hub*)

**Mandatory Reporting:** The legal requirement to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect is known as mandatory reporting. Mandated persons include teachers, nurses, police, psychologists, psychiatrists and medical practitioners. (*Safe Schools Hub*)

**Reasonable Belief:** When 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.

**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 Saint Ignatius College Geelong have the right to feel safe and be safe.

The wellbeing of children 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 children are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for threats to their safety. There is particular attention paid to the most vulnerable children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children 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 providing children with reasonable and safe channels through which they can report any concerns for their safety or the safety of any other children, free from reprisal.
- (e) We commit to taking action to ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse or harm.
- (f) We commit to teaching children and young people the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing.
- (g) We commit to seeking input and feedback from students regarding the creation of a safe school environment.
- (h) We commit to ensuring that all staff, volunteers and contractors with direct child contact are appropriately vetted and for rare/occasional contact, such as school campus visits by trades people or emergency services personnel, we will make sure that any such people are supervised and/or not placed in the vicinity of children

### ***Our commitment to our parents and carers***

- (a) We commit to communicating honestly and openly with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children, by providing timely and relevant advice on child safe practices (e.g., use of technology for 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 (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders), and being sensitive as to how this may impact on student safety issues.
- (e) We commit to acknowledging children and families living with a disability - to being sensitive as to how this may impact on student safety issues and to making every reasonable effort towards offering any such child unimpeded opportunities for education and associated activities.
- (f) We commit to continuously reviewing and improving our systems to protect children from abuse.



### ***Our commitment to our school staff (i.e., employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy)***

- (a) We commit to providing all Saint Ignatius College Geelong 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 promoting good child safe conduct amongst staff members which helps them to protect and maintain their reputations and good standing in our community.
- (d) We commit to providing a just, reasonable and legal process for any staff member(s) facing a reportable conduct claim.
- (e) We commit to listening to all concerns voiced by Saint Ignatius College Geelong staff, clergy, volunteers, and contractors about keeping children and young people safe from harm.
- (f) We commit to providing opportunities for Saint Ignatius College Geelong school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.

## ***6. Responsibilities and Organisational Arrangements***

Everyone employed or volunteering at Saint Ignatius College Geelong 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 School Leadership***

The principal, the school governing authority and school leaders at Saint Ignatius College Geelong 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, clergy, 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 school personnel 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 school meets the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in Ministerial Order No. 870.

## **6.2 Guide to Responsibilities of School Staff**

Responsibilities of school staff (school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy) 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 school 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 school's Child Safety Code of Conduct.

## **6.3 Organisational Arrangements**

A student Wellbeing Team (SWT) is in place to ensure policies and procedures are in place and implemented that includes Child Protection and Safety.

The Deputy Principal (Student Wellbeing) is responsible for the SWT.

The Deputy Principal (Student Wellbeing) is the designated Child Safety Officer.

The Deputy Principal (Student Wellbeing), Year Level Coordinators and Student Wellbeing Officers are key contact persons for the Child Protection and Safety matters.

In the event of a reportable conduct claim against the Deputy Principal, the Principal shall serve as the Child Safety Officer and line of reporting.

## **7. Expectations of our School Staff – Child Safety Code of Conduct**

At Saint Ignatius College Geelong community, we expect school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy 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 school.

All school 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 *Safeguarding Children Code of Conduct* (available on our website under 'Our School' - *Child Safety Commitment*), which recognises the critical role that school staff play in protecting the students in our care and establishes clear expectations of school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy for appropriate behaviour with children in order to safeguard them against abuse and or neglect.

Our Code also protects school staff through clarification of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

## **8. Student Safety and Participation**

At Saint Ignatius College Geelong, 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 school 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 school 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 school's *Child Protection – Reporting Policy: CEM Policy 2.19* (available on our website under 'Our School' - *Child Safety Commitment*), 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 school 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.

We are transparent and open about our complaints and disclosure processes, which are outlined and detailed in the following policies and procedures, accessible on the College web portal, or through our main reception upon request:

- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Child Safety Policy
- Ministerial Order No.870
- Allegation of Child Abuse Reporting Procedure
- ChildSafe Standards 5 - Schools Guide
- Child Abuse: Four Critical Actions

## 10. Screening and Recruitment of School Staff

Saint Ignatius College Geelong 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 Safe 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:

- advertise that the College is a child safe organisation with an associated policy and code of conduct.
- confirm an 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.

- assess applicant awareness and response to interview questioning concerning child safety and the seriousness with which cases of child abuse are handled.
- confirm that if the applicant is successful, any information that comes to hand post-hiring, concerning matters of child abuse, would result in termination and turning such information over to the authorities as required by law.
- provide the appropriate levels of probation, supervision, training and support to staff as part of the induction process and as part of continuous learning around up-to date child safe practices.

We have processes for monitoring and assessing the continuing suitability of school staff to work with children, including regular performance appraisals, reviews of the status of Working with Children Checks and staff professional registration requirements such as the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration. Further, the College may seek additional investigation or detail about the ongoing suitability of any member of staff where it has reasonable cause to do so and through any legal means it deems necessary to ensure the ongoing safety of students.

## ***11. Child Safety – Education and Training for School Staff***

*Saint Ignatius College Geelong* provides employees, volunteers and clergy 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.

## ***12. Risk Management***

At Saint Ignatius College Geelong we are committed to proactively and systematically identifying and assessing risks to student safety across our whole school environment, and to treating those risks down to the lowest reasonably achievable residual levels. We document, implement, monitor and review our risk management strategies for child safety on a bi-annual basis and ensure that the strategies change as needed and as new risks arise.

## ***13. Relevant Legislation***

- ***Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.) ; Including The Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015 (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.)*** 3 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 another person of, or over the age of 18 years against a child under 16 years 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 a person of, or over the age of 18 years 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.



- c) **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 or through a third party.

## 14. **Related Policies**

### 14.1 **Catholic Education Melbourne Policies**

- Policy 2.2: Guidelines Relating to the Employment of Staff (currently under review)
- Policy 2.19: Child Protection – Reporting Obligations
- Policy 2.19a: School Guidelines –Police and DHHS Interview Protocols
- Policy 2.20: Misconduct Policy (withdrawn and currently under review)
- Policy 2.26: Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools(currently under review)

### 14.2 **School Policies**

- Child Safety Policy and Practices
- Acceptable Behaviour Policy
- Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Procedures (Students)
- Complaints Handling Policy
- Complaints Handling Procedure
- Drug and Alcohol Policy
- Student Wellbeing Policy

## 15. **Breach of Policy**

Where an **employee** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this Policy, Saint Ignatius College Geelong 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.

Principal: Michael Exton Ph: 5251 1136 Email: [extonm@ignatius.vic.edu.au](mailto:extonm@ignatius.vic.edu.au)

Deputy Principal [Students] (SICG Child Safe Officer)  
Ph: 5251 1136 Email: [timmsm@ignatius.vic.edu.au](mailto:timmsm@ignatius.vic.edu.au)

Where the **principal** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the concerned party is advised to contact the parish priest or the employer.

Relevant notification should also be made to Catholic Education Melbourne (Office of Professional Conduct, Ethics and Investigation).

President of the Association of Canonical Administrators  
Fr. James Puppady Ph: 5251 1136 Email: [puppady@gmail.com](mailto:puppady@gmail.com)

Where any **other member of the school community** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the school is to take appropriate action, including in accordance with Child Protection – Reporting Obligations and Complaints Handling Policy and/or contact Catholic Education Melbourne (Office of Professional Conduct, Ethics and Investigation).

SICG Child Safe Officer: Mr Michael Timms  
Ph: 5251 1136 Email: [timmsm@ignatius.vic.edu.au](mailto:timmsm@ignatius.vic.edu.au)

## **16. Review of this Child Safety Policy**

At Saint Ignatius College Geelong 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 reviewed bi-annually or sooner if required, 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 (eg. major review, minor review) |
|------------|--|
| 10.02.2016 | Initial policy ratified                  |
| 10.08.2016 | Major review                             |
| 12.03.2020 | Major review                             |

## **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) 2013, *Victorian Catholic Education Multi Enterprise Agreement 2013, CECV*.

Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, Vatican.

Safe Schools Hub 2014, *National Safe Schools Framework Glossary*, Australian Government Department of Education and Training.

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.

Victorian Government Department of Justice 2016, *Betrayal of Trust Implementation*.

The United Nations Rights of the Child (Ratified by the Australian Government in 1990); <https://www.unicef.org.au/Upload/UNICEF/Media/Our%20work/childfriendlycrc.pdf> (Accessed, 13 March, 2020)

A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation Version 4, Commission for Children and Young People, 2018, Victorian Government