



Rationale

The Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL) is committed to zero tolerance of child abuse as articulated in DOBCEL's Commitment Statement to Child Safety.

All staff and members of DOBCEL's school communities have a duty of care to protect the safety, health and wellbeing of children in their care.

DOBCEL's schools consist of diverse populations, including students with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

DOBCEL's Board, as a governing authority, understands its obligations in relation to Ministerial Order No. 1359: Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises and is committed to ensuring that compliance and regulatory obligations are met at all times.

This document is aligned with DOBCEL's child safety policies and procedures.

Child Safety Risk Management

DOBCEL and its schools have adopted a risk management approach to child protection by developing and implementing strategies that identify and mitigate child protection risks. They are based on:

- the nature of all school environments
- the activities students undertake at schools (including the provision of services by contractors or outside a school's physical environment)
- the physical and online environments that exist in schools
- the characteristics and needs of all students
- the importance of embedding an environment of child protection as part of the culture of DOBCEL and its schools.

DOBCEL and its schools have implemented, and will continually maintain adherence to, the following eleven (11) standards:

Standard 1:	Culturally safe environments
Standard 2:	The centrality of child safety and wellbeing in leadership, governance and culture
Standard 3:	Child and student empowerment

Standard 4:	Family engagement
Standard 5:	Diversity and equity
Standard 6:	Suitable staff and volunteers
Standard 7:	Complaints processes
Standard 8:	Child safety knowledge, skills and awareness
Standard 9:	Child safety in physical and online environments
Standard 10:	Review of child safety practices
Standard 11:	Implementation of child safety practices

As well as complying with these eleven Child Safe Standards, DOBCEL has implemented the following risk mitigation strategies to ensure that schools maintain a proactive approach to their duty of care in protecting children from harm and adhering to DOBCEL’s legal and regulatory obligations:

- The implementation of child safety policies, strategies and practices, whereby the standards are communicated via induction and ongoing training to staff annually. They include identifying risks of child abuse in the school environment, and articulating their obligations and responsibilities for managing these risks.
- The provision of child safety training during induction but also through annual training revision. This commitment exemplifies the Board’s vision of having a strong culture in relation to child safety and protection.
- The implementation of extensive policies and procedures regarding excursions and camps, which ensure that child protection risks specific to such activities have been identified and the appropriate checks put in place.
- Ongoing periodic reviews of all physical school environments are conducted to ensure that isolation risks have been eliminated, such as solid classroom doors or rooms with no windows, or that procedural controls have been implemented where total elimination is not feasible.
- Procedures have been developed for verifying the working-with-children check (WWCC) status of all staff and visitors who may have direct unsupervised contact with students.
- A system of assurance whereby risks of child abuse, and actions taken to reduce or remove these risks (risk controls), have been recorded. The system is also to be used to monitor risk controls and to evaluate their overall effectiveness on a regular basis. These risks are to be articulated in both the corporate and school risk registers, where controls are validated to ensure their effectiveness. DOBCEL will ensure that all controls are functional at schools to ensure there is compliance and alignment with DOBCEL’s child safe standards and its zero tolerance for child abuse.

Child Safe Standard: Risk Assessment Process

As part of child safety, risk assessments should be undertaken for any activity or event as well as for testing the compliance measures that have been put in place.

As each school is different, it is vital that each school's risk event or environment is assessed. The adequacy of existing controls should be evaluated, and risk treatments (initiatives) should be developed if gaps (vulnerabilities) have been identified.

A risk assessment enables a school to control an identified risk by implementing measures to ensure child safety and the embedding of a culture of proactive child protection as articulated by the DOBCEL child safe standards.

The following table contains a list of terms that are used in risk assessment:

Term	Definition
Risk	A situation in which the protection of a child could be compromised.
Risk Assessment	A systematic process of evaluating the possible risks that may be linked to an activity or a task.
Risk Management	A coordinated approach to managing risks and ensuring adherence to child safe standards.

Table 1: Risk Definition Table

Process

The following table details the principles for risk management in DOBCEL schools.

Process	Description
Identify Risk	Identify where, when, why and how events could prevent, delay, or degrade the main outcome of the event, activity or meeting.
Analyse Risk	Determine the likelihood of the risks occurring and the potential consequences related to the risks and how these could occur (cause and impacts).
Evaluate Risk	Compare the level of risk against the potential adverse outcomes so that decisions can be made on how to manage the priorities.

Table 2: Risk Management Principles

Process	Description
Control Risk	Develop and implement strategies and action plans which modify the risk and are cost effective and beneficial to all involved.
Monitor and Review Risk	Monitor the effectiveness of the processes put in place. Provide feedback for improvement, consider any follow up required from incidences.

Each school must ensure child safety risk is considered. Child safety risks must be identified and assessed as part of standard risk management processes at school level and this includes activities that the school oversees directly as well as those where the school name is being used in the arranging and operation of such activities.

Child safety risks must be controlled from the initial planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of an activity and must be managed throughout the lifecycle of the activity. This could include an excursion, incursion, camp or a risk assessment on school level (for example, isolated areas of buildings, lack of supervision areas, management/procedural elements, etc.).

Activities can be high risk for a number of reasons that relate to the activities' nature, location, and cultural sensitivities, and whether other organisations are involved, etc.

In addition, a school may be conducting a low-risk activity; however, the activity may be occurring in a non-school building or environment, which could change the nature of the risk. A child protection risk assessment must be completed before proceeding with the activity. In other words, the person undertaking the assessment should consider the risk.

As part of the risk assessment, factors that could cause this risk to occur should be considered, and what impacts (worse case) could occur if controls are not in place. The type of harm that could impact children should be addressed.

Table 3: Types of Harm and Abuse

**Adapted from the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian*

Unintentional/accidental harm	Physical abuse	Cultural abuse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor physical environment leading to injury Poor supervision High-risk activity Lack of risk mitigation strategies in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical punishment Pushing, shoving, punching slapping, biting, kicking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of cultural respect Racial or cultural vilification or discrimination Lack of support to enable a child to be aware of or express their cultural identity

Neglect

- Lack of supervision
- Not providing adequate nourishment
- Not providing adequate clothing or shelter
- Not meeting the specific physical or cognitive needs of children

Physical abuse

- Sexual abuse, assault, and exploitation
- Grooming
- Inappropriate touching
- Inappropriate conversations of a sexual nature (either face-to-face, online or via other technology)
- Crossing professional boundaries

Psychological abuse

- Bullying
- Threatening language
- Shaming
- Intentional ignoring and isolating (either face to face, online, or via other technology)
- Spiritual

The assessment should identify what controls are in place to prevent or mitigate the risk from occurring. If vulnerabilities or gaps have been identified, it is vital that risk treatments (which can be termed as actions or initiatives) be implemented to reduce the element of risk.

Risk ratings should be undertaken using the DOBCEL Risk Management Framework to assess the likelihood and consequence of risk.

All risk assessments should be retained and included in a school's child safe risk assessment and register. If risks are uncontrolled, they need to be escalated as indicated by the risk management framework.

Reference Documents

- St Mary's Primary School Warracknabeal- Child Safe Risk Assessment and Register
- DOBCEL Staff Employment, Screening and Supervision
- [Department of Families, Fairness and Housing: Indicators of Abuse](#)