



Statement

At St Mary's Primary School, Warracknabeal all children have a right to feel safe. The school provides an environment in which they can receive appropriate assistance and response regarding their personal safety. The school monitors student wellbeing and implements processes that are consistent with the Child Safe Standards (Ministerial order 870). The school ensures that all forms of suspected child abuse are reported appropriately and timely when a reasonable belief has been formed that child abuse has or could occur.

Definitions

Child abuse includes—

- any act committed against a child involving—
 - o a sexual offence or
 - o an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
- the infliction, on a child, of—
 - o physical violence or
 - o serious emotional or psychological harm
- serious neglect of a child.

Reasonable belief might be formed if:

- A child states they have been physically or sexually abused
- A child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (they may be referring to themselves)
- Someone who knows a child states that they have been physically or sexually abused
- A child exhibits sexually abusive or age-inappropriate behaviours
- Professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been, or is likely to be, abused
- Signs of abuse lead to a belief the child has been abused.

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all staff to be familiar with the relevant policy, procedures and resources for the Child Safe Standards and implement accordingly to ensure a safe environment at all times.

This includes:

- The policies required by school and procedures (required by Ministerial Order 870) that prescribes specifically what St Mary's Primary School Warracknabeal must do in order to comply with these Child Safe Standards including:
 - o Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety such as professional learning, risk management, commitment statement (Standard one)



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- St Mary's Primary School Warracknabeal's Child Safety Policy that is available on school website (Standard Two)
- DOBCEL Safeguarding Children and Young People: Child Safety Code of Conduct that is available on school website (Standard Three)
- St Mary's Primary School Warracknabeal Staff Selection, Supervision and Management Practices for a Child Safe Environment -Staff and Administration Handbook (Standard Four)
- Procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of suspected child abuse- see resource PROTECT Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools (Standard Five)
- Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse. See PROTECT Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools (Standard Six)
- Strategies to promote child empowerment and participation such as student voice in the classroom and student representatives (Standard Seven)

The resources PROTECT Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools includes:

- Understanding your obligations
- Identifying signs of abuse
- Responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse
- Reporting to authorities PROTECT Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools is available at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/default.aspx?Redirect=1>

Implementation

Every person involved in Catholic education 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 children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd 2016).

Providing a Safe Environment

- Staff are required to provide a safe environment (any environment in which a school activity is being conducted) at all times. This includes creating a culture in which students can approach staff with any concerns regarding safety.
- The curriculum includes developing student knowledge, skills and capabilities in identifying and reporting safety issues (see also Learning and Teaching Policy).
- 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. A reasonable belief is not the same as having proof but is more than speculation or rumour (DOBCEL PROTECT: Reporting and Responding



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Obligations Policy and the St Mary's PROTECT: Reporting and Responding Procedure).

Child Safe Officer

St Mary's Primary School Warracknabeal has a staff member (Mr Frank McGrath) who acts as the school's Child Safety Officer and, where possible, the CSO, plays an essential role in ensuring that the school is a child safe school through:

- leading the school's child safety culture
- ensuring that child safety is a standard item on staff and School Advisory Council (SAC) meeting agendas
- developing and enhancing the school's child safety strategies
- Proactively monitoring the effectiveness of child safety strategies and reviewing the strategies on the risk register to mitigate child safety risks
- informing staff and SAC of changes or modifications to the risk register
- collaborating with the OHS Officer in reducing risks in the environment that affect child safety
- coordinating reviews of the child safety strategies
- communicating the school's child safety strategies to the school community
- training staff (including contractors and volunteers) in the school's child safety strategies
- leading or delivering programs for children about the school's child safety strategies
- developing policies, procedures and supporting documentation including communications and resources
- attending Catholic Education Ballarat briefings and training on child safety
- self-auditing the school's adherence to Ministerial Order 870
- ensuring all school staff complete the annual Mandatory Reporting online training module
- providing advice to staff, students and families on child safety matters
- documenting, collating and maintaining all records pertaining to reporting child safety issues.

The role description for the Child Safe Officer is on the St Mary's Primary School Warracknabeal's website.

Mandatory Reporting (all teachers and principals)

- All Victorian Institute Teaching (VIT) registered teachers (including principals) and staff that have been granted permission to teach by the VIT are mandated by law to report signs of child abuse.
- Sexual abuse (including grooming) must be reported to the Victorian Police and other forms of abuse reported to the Department of Health (DOH). This contact should be made as soon as possible once a reasonable belief has been formed.



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• St Mary's Primary School Warracknabeal follows the procedures for responding to and reporting incidents of abuse outlined in the PROTECT Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools

- Failure to report suspected child sexual abuse is a criminal offence Reporting Sexual Abuse (all adults)
- All adults (teachers, non-teaching staff and community) must report suspected child sexual abuse including grooming to police if a reasonable belief has been formed.
- Staff will be reminded of mandatory responsibilities annually and participate in an annual (DET) Mandatory Reporting eLearning Module each year to support their understanding in this area. Records of the completion of this training are maintained in a register in the School Administration Office.
- New staff will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of induction.
- Staff members do not have to inform the Principal of their concerns before reporting the incident.
- Parents/carers will be reminded annually of their obligations in school newsletter and parent handbook.
- Students 18 years or older will be reminded of their obligations through targeted information avenues
- If the allegation is made against a member of the clergy, religious or school staff, police are notified as well as the Bishop of Ballarat and DOBCEL. The principal is informed when it is a staff member (other than the principal).
- Failure to report suspected child sexual abuse including grooming is a criminal offence

Non-teaching staff – reporting child abuse

- Sexual abuse including grooming is reported to police.
- Failure to report suspected child sexual abuse including grooming is a criminal offence
- Other forms of abuse must be reported to the child's teacher and/or principal.
- Any form of abuse in which an allegation is made against a member of the clergy or religious or a school staff including the principal, volunteer, visitor or external provider member including the principal, police are notified first. Then notify the principal (if not the suspected source of the abuse) and the Director of Catholic Education.

Allegations Against Clergy or Religious or School Staff Member (all staff, volunteers, external providers, school community)

- If the allegation of any form of child abuse is made against a member of the clergy or religious or a school staff including the principal, volunteer, visitor or external provider member, police are notified first. Then notify the principal (if not the suspected source of the abuse) and the Director of Catholic Education.
- Do not inform or interview the suspected person

Student Disclosure



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- Students who disclose any form of abuse must be provided appropriate assistance and is reported to the police if sexual abuse and other abuse issues to the Department of Health. The school does not conduct an investigation as it can contaminate evidence.
- Students, who disclose to staff a desire to harm themselves or others, must be reported by staff to the principal who will take the appropriate action.
- Refer to PROTECT Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools

Student Offenders

- Student sexual offending refers to sexual behaviour that is led by a student 10 years and over which may amount to a sexual offence.
- A sexual offence includes rape, sexual assault, indecent acts and other unwanted sexualised touching, all of which are offences under the Crimes Act 1958.
- Additionally under Victorian Law:
 - o children between 12-15 can only consent to sexual activity with a peer no more than two years their senior (therefore sexual contact led by a student with a child outside of these age parameters may amount to student sexual offending).
 - o in order for a person to consent to sexual activity they have to have the capacity to understand the context and possible consequences of the act (therefore sexual contact led by a student involving a person with a cognitive impairment or affected by alcohol and other drugs may also amount to student sexual offending)
- Refer to resource DOBCEL PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending
- Refer to the resource Four Critical Actions: Identifying and Responding to all Forms of Child Abuse in Victorian Schools which provides procedures to follow. This resource is available at DET
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/stusexoffdefine.aspx>
- It is important to seek further advice if you are unsure whether behaviour, or suspected behaviour constitutes student sexual offending, and/or whether it is indicative of any underlying abuse.

Documentation and Follow Up

- All reports, information sheets and subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and remain strictly confidential.
- All incidents to be monitored, and any subsequent signs or indications of abuse are also to be reported.
- Refer to PROTECT Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools regarding follow up of police or Department of Health. These are the procedures to be followed at all times at St Mary's Primary School Warracknabeal .



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Professional Learning

Beginning of each year, staff will:

- Re-commit to the DOBCEL Safeguarding Children and Young People: Code of Conduct for working with children
- Be given an opportunity to re-familiarize themselves with the Responding to PROTECT Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools resource and its implications
- Receive any updates on all areas related to duty of care, mandatory reporting and the child safe standards
- Receive training on their obligations and responsibilities in regard to witnessing an offence, forming a suspicion or receiving a disclosure
- Review the role the school's Child Safe Officer
- Review and clarify their duty of care obligations in relation to the criminal offences of failure to disclose, failure to protect and grooming

Throughout the year, all staff will:

- Continue to undertake appropriate updates/training in areas of child safety
- Engage in staff meetings that further build their understanding of duty of care and how it applies to child safety, including their obligations with regards to identifying and responding to all forms of abuse. This will include references to the PROTECT Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools and DOBCEL Protect: Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending
- Annual briefing session on DOBCEL Safeguarding Children and Young People: Code of Conduct for working with children
- Induction of new staff (see also Duty of Care Policy) on student safety policies and procedures
- All staff will undertake the (DET) Mandatory Reporting eLearning Module and a record of staff completion will be updated in the school document management system. Records of the completion of this module is maintained on file in the School Administration Office.

Communication

The Principal will communicate to the school community about child safety matters through:

1. Newsletter updates and other communications that informs parents of their obligations and procedures regarding the reporting of suspected child abuse as well as school policy and procedures
2. Publication of relevant policies on the school website and staff intranet
3. Informing regularly the governing authority and School Advisory Council on the implementation of policies and procedures and risk management on child safety
4. Making links to support material, such as the DOBCEL PROTECT: Reporting & Responding Obligations and the St Mary's PROTECT: Reporting & responding Procedures resources, available on school website
5. Parents will be made aware of the procedures for volunteering at St Mary's Primary School Warracknabeal that are outlined in CECV Guidelines on the engagement of volunteers in Catholic Schools. [Volunteer Guidelines](#)



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6. All volunteers will be required to complete the DOBCEL Safeguarding Children and Young People: Code of Conduct for working with children
7. Staff will be made aware of the obligation to supervise all volunteers, visitors and where appropriate, external providers
8. Communicating to students the process and support available if they disclose child abuse
9. Staff and parents will be made aware of the procedures for external providers that are outlined in CECV Guidelines on Engagement of External Contractors in Catholic Schools to ensure the school meets its duty of care in providing a safe environment for students including procedures for Child Safety Standards. The guidelines are available at [Contractor Guidelines](#)

Relevant Legislation

St Mary's Primary School Warracknabeal will comply with the 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.), the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic.) and the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic.).

Risk Management

The principal and Child Safe Officer will monitor and evaluate the implementation of child safety policy and procedures. This will include maintaining and reviewing the risk management register and communicating to staff and school community strategies to mitigate identified risks.

Related Policy and Documents

- DOBCEL Child Safe Governance Policy and Procedures
- St Mary's Primary School Warracknabeal : Child Safety Policy
- DOBCEL Safeguarding Children and Young People: Code of Conduct
- St Mary's Primary School Warracknabeal : Commitment Policy
- Ministerial Order 807
- PROTECT Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools
- DOBCEL Reportable Conduct Scheme.
- DOBCEL PROTECT: Reporting and Responding Obligations Policy
- St Mary's PROTECT: Reporting & Responding Obligations Procedures
- DOBCEL PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending
- DOBCEL School Child safe Officer Role Description
- DOBCEL Student Empowerment & Participation Policy
- DOBCEL Child Safe Risk Management
- St Mary's Child Safe Risk Assessment and Register.
- DOBCEL School Guidelines for Police and DOH Interviews
- DOBCEL Staff Employment, Screening and Supervision Guidelines.
- St Mary's Duty of Care Policy
- CECV Guidelines on the engagement of volunteers in Catholic Schools
- CECV Guidelines on the engagement of Contractors in Catholic schools



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Principal