

# SACRED HEART PARISH SCHOOL

## CHILD SAFE

### POLICY

## **CHILD SAFE**

Sacred Heart Parish School commits to providing a safe and nurturing culture for all of its children and young people through:

### **Upholding the primacy of the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.**

At all times, the ongoing safety and wellbeing of all children and young people will be the primary focus of care and decision-making, with particular attention paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

To create and maintain a safe and nurturing culture, Sacred Heart Parish School will actively and continually develop and review all policies, processes and practices, informed by emerging thinking and evidence.

### **Empowering families, children, young people and staff to have a voice and raise concerns.**

Sacred Heart Parish School, in partnership with our families, will ensure our children and young people, are engaged and active participants in decision-making processes, particularly those that have an impact on their safety.

This means that the views of our staff, children, young people and families are taken seriously and their concerns are addressed in a just and timely manner. Our children and young people are also provided with the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing.

### **Implementing rigorous risk-management and employment practices.**

Sacred Heart Parish School will systematically and continually identify and assess risks to child safety and will eliminate (where possible) or reduce all potential sources of harm. Effective risk management will be embedded in our school life through effective, transparent and well-understood policies, procedures and practices.

Sacred Heart Parish School will employ highly competent and professional staff who are formed and challenged to maintain the safety of all students. The high-quality of staff appointments will be upheld through rigorous employment and staff review processes and practices.

Sacred Heart Parish School will stay abreast of current legislation and will meet their legislative duties to protect the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in their care, including the Victorian Child Safe Standards (Victorian Government 2016), mandatory reporting, grooming, failure to disclose and failure to protect requirements.

# Policy

Sacred Heart Parish School is committed to child safety.

Sacred Heart Parish School will ensure that our children will be safe, happy and empowered. We will support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.

Sacred Heart Parish School is committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

Sacred Heart Parish School has a zero tolerance to child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously.

At Sacred Heart Parish School we are aware of our legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety.

Sacred Heart Parish School is committed to preventing child abuse, identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

Sacred Heart Parish Schools is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

Sacred Heart Parish School supports and respects all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

**If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone:**

**DHS (Department of Health & Human Services) 1300 555 526.**

## ***Our children***

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants at Sacred Heart Parish School. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance at Sacred Heart Parish School, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

## ***Our staff and volunteers***

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children at Sacred Heart Parish School.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

## ***Training and supervision***

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone at Sacred Heart Parish School understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our school culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand Sacred Heart Parish School's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to this organisation's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

### ***Recruitment***

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Sacred Heart Parish School understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a *Working with Children Check* and to provide evidence of this Check

We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

### **Fair procedures for personnel**

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form<sup>1</sup>, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

### ***Privacy***

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

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### *Legislative responsibilities*

Sacred Heart Parish School takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in Sacred Heart Parish School will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

### *Regular review*

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

### *Allegations, concerns and complaints*

Sacred Heart Parish School takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.