St Joseph's Primary School
CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

At St Joseph's Primary School (the School), we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of the School and Catholic education. This commitment is drawn from the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the Gospel.

Our commitment to child safety reflects our Catholic identity, school vision and core values. We strive to nurture a learning environment where faith, learning and wellbeing are interconnected, and where all children can grow academically, spiritually, socially and emotionally in a culture of trust, belonging and hope.

St Joseph's Primary School has a zero tolerance for child abuse. We are committed to acting in the best interests of children and young people and to providing a physically, emotionally, culturally and spiritually safe environment. We recognise our moral, legal and professional responsibility to safeguard all children from harm and to uphold the Child Safe Standards in all aspects of school life.

We are committed to fostering a child safe culture that is championed and modelled by leaders, staff, volunteers and the wider school community. Particular attention is given to promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disability, and children who may be vulnerable or at greater risk of harm.

Through strong partnerships with families, active student voice, rigorous safeguarding practices and ongoing staff formation, St Joseph's seeks to ensure that every child feels safe, respected, heard and empowered. Child safety is a shared responsibility and is fundamental to our mission of nurturing confident, compassionate and resilient young people who live out the values of the Gospel.

2.0 PURPOSE

This Policy supports the delivery of a sustainable and inclusive education that nurtures each student's potential, equips them to thrive in a dynamic world and is enriched by our flourishing Catholic culture. This Policy is underpinned by the Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited (DOSCEL) values of *Integrity, Excellence and Inclusion*.

This Policy demonstrates the School's commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This Policy provides an overview of the School's approach to implementing *Ministerial Order No. 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises* (Ministerial Order No. 1359), which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

The Policy informs the School community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

This Policy informs *the Child Safety and Wellbeing Procedures*.

3.0 CATHOLIC MISSION

The School brings to life the mission of the Catholic Church by engaging and aligning all efforts toward the achievement of our vision for education: *faith-inspired educational excellence for a hope filled future*.

4.0 COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

The School is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families. The School has zero tolerance for any form of child abuse and is deeply committed to upholding and embedding the highest standards of child safety across our schools. The School takes proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environment.

We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views are respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. We are committed to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's ability to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights is encouraged and actively supported. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

The School actively supports and facilitates participation and inclusion by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, students and their families. Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning and/or asexual (LGBTIQA+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at the School. The School adopts measures to ensure racism is identified, confronted and not tolerated and ensures any instances of racism within the school environment are addressed with appropriate consequences.

The School promotes positive relationships between students and adults, including school staff, contractors, volunteers, parents, guardians and carers and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

The School takes proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in the School environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

The School embeds strategies which equip staff, students, volunteers and the school community to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and ensures that staff, students, volunteers and the School community understand the importance of Aboriginal culture to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and students.

5.0 SCOPE

This Policy:

5.1 Applies to all school staff (including teachers, non-teachers, casual employees and pre-service teachers), volunteers and contractors whether they work in direct contact with students or not. It also applies to School Advisory Committee members.

5.2 Applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided for a student's use (for example, a school camp, Child-connected Work, Child-related Work) and those provided through third-party providers.

6.0 POLICY OUTCOMES

6.1 A culturally safe and inclusive environment is created, where the diverse identities, histories and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are recognised, respected and valued, alongside the dignity and diversity of all children.

Child safety and wellbeing are embedded in governance, leadership and decision making processes across the School.

6.2 Children and young people are empowered to understand their rights, actively contribute to decisions that affect them, and experience a school environment where they feel safe and are safe.

6.3 Equity is upheld and diversity is respected, ensuring the inherent dignity of every child and young person in the School's care.

6.4 Families and members of the School community are engaged as active partners in promoting child safety and wellbeing, and participate meaningfully in decisions that impact their children.

6.5 A safe physical and online environment is consistently maintained for all children and young people.

6.6 Policies and procedures promote openness and trust, enabling all members of the school community and particularly children and young people to feel safe to raise concerns or disclose risks of harm.

6.7 School staff are equipped with the necessary training to uphold child safety and wellbeing and to respond effectively to concerns.

6.8 All complaints, concerns and disclosures of child abuse are addressed promptly, respectfully and thoroughly, ensuring a strong and consistent response to child safety issues.

7.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in the School has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety. The School is committed to regularly reviewing the child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, school staff and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies. The School ensures a child safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels.

7.1 School Leadership Team

The School leadership team (comprising of the Principal, Mental Health and Wellbeing Leader and Curriculum Leader is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order No. 1359.

The Principal:

- ensures that effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed.
- models a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and school staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing.
- enables inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered.
- reinforces high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students.
- promotes regular open discussion on child safety issues within the school community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and School Advisory Committee meetings.
- ensures risk management strategies are documented and in place that focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks related to child safety and wellbeing in the school.
- facilitates and maintains records of regular (at least annually) professional learning for school staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and the prevention of, and responding to, abuse.

- creates an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

7.2 School Staff, Contractors and Volunteers

All school staff, contractors and volunteers:

- participate in annual child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the School or the DOSCEL Office, and always follow the School and DOSCEL's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures.
- act in accordance with the School's *Child Safety Code of Conduct* Child Safety Code of Conduct - Staff.docx
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with the Four Critical Actions for Schools and by following the School policies and procedures:
  - *Protection of Children Policy.*
  - *Mandatory Reporting Policy.*
  - *Reportable Conduct Policy.*
- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

7.3 School Advisory Committee

In performing the roles and responsibilities in accordance with the *DOSCEL School Advisory Committee Charter*, School Advisory Committee members:

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community.
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at School Advisory Committee meetings.
- undertake annual training on child safety provided by the School.
- provide feedback in relation to, and act in accordance with, the School's Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to School Advisory Committee members.
- participate in the selection process of the school principal.

7.4 Specific School Staff Child Safety Responsibilities

The School has nominated a Mental Health and Wellbeing Leader (MHWL) to support the Principal to implement the School's child safety policies and practices, including school staff and volunteer training.

The responsibilities of the MHWL are outlined in the DOSCEL *Guidance for Child Safety Champions*. In addition to these roles, the School MHWL is also responsible for:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing

The School Principal and MHWL are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

- The Principal is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*. Anyone in the school community should approach Principal if they have any concerns about the School's compliance with the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*.
- The Principal is responsible for informing the School community about this Policy and making it publicly available.
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in other child safety policies and procedures, including but not limited to the *Child Safety Code of Conduct*, *Protection of Children – Reporting Obligations Procedure*, *Mandatory Reporting Policy* and *Child Safety Risk Register*.

The School has also established a Child Safety and Wellbeing Team and a Student Reference Group on child safety. The Child Safety and Wellbeing Team meet regularly to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing. The Student Reference Group provides an opportunity for students to provide input into school child safety strategies.

The Risk Management Committee monitors the Child Safety Risk Register.

8.0 DEFINITIONS

The following terms in this Policy have specific definitions used in relation to the *Victorian Child Safe Standards* and *Ministerial Order No. 1359*:

8.1 **Child:** Child means a child or young person who is under the age of 18 years.

8.2 **Child Safety:** Child safety includes 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 suspicions, incidents, disclosures or allegations of child abuse.

8.3 **Child Abuse:** Child abuse includes:

a. any act committed against a child involving:
   1. a sexual offence.
   2. grooming offences under section *49m 1 of the Crimes Act 1958*.

b. the infliction, on a child, of:
   1. physical violence.
   2. serious emotional or psychological harm.

c. the serious neglect of a child.

8.4 **Child-connected Work:** Child-connected work means:

work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Note: Working with Children clearance is required by law only for people who engage in child-related work. Schools and school boarding premises may also choose to require suitability checks (including Working with Children clearance) for visitors and volunteers engaging in child-connected work.

8.5 **Child-related Work:** The Worker Screening Act 2020 defines 'child-related work' as work which usually involves (or is likely to involve) direct contact with a child, irrespective of whether that contact is supervised or not, and in any of the child-related occupational fields listed in the Act.

The definition of direct contact includes oral, written or electronic communication as well as face-to-face and physical contact. 'Child-related work' may be either paid or unpaid (voluntary).

There are exemptions from the Act including people under 18 years of age, parent volunteers whose child ordinarily participates in the activity, sworn police officers, teachers currently registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching, and visiting workers who do not ordinarily reside and perform child-related work in Victoria, among others.

8.6 **School Environment:** School environment means any of the following physical, online or virtual places, used during or outside school hours:

a. A campus of the school.
b. Online or virtual school environments made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child or student (including email, intranet systems, software applications, collaboration tools, and online services).
c. Other locations provided by the school or through a third-party provider for a child or student to use including, but not limited to, locations used for:
   - Camps.
   - approved homestay accommodation.
   - delivery of education and training such as registered training organisations, TAFEs, non-school senior secondary providers or another school; or (iv) sporting events, excursions, competitions or other events.

8.7 **School Staff:** in a non-Government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:

- directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority.
- a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary) engaged by the school governing authority to perform child-related work.
- a minister of religion, a religious leader or an employee or officer of a religious body associated with the school.

8.8 **School Governing Authority:** School governing authority means:

a) the proprietor of a school, including a person authorised to act for or on behalf of the proprietor.
b) the governing body for a school (however described), as authorised by the proprietor of a school or the *Education Training Reform Act 2006* (ETR Act).

c) the principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school, the school governing body, or the ETR Act.

8.9 **Student:** Student means a person who is enrolled at or attends the school.

8.10 **Volunteer:** Volunteer means a person who performs work without remuneration or reward for the school or school boarding premises in the school environment or school boarding premises environment.

9.0 COMMUNICATION

This Policy is available on the School website and provided to parents upon request.

This Policy is available to staff through the school portal and staff are annually inducted or upskilled on this Policy.

10.0 POLICY INFORMATION

Policy Owner	Governance
Approving Authority	DOSCEL Board
Assigned Board Committee	Culture Ethics and Conduct
Board Approval	February 2026
Risk Rating	Medium
Implementation	March 2026
Review Date	March 2028

POLICY DATABASE INFORMATION	
Supporting Documents	Child Safety and Wellbeing Procedures