

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Preamble

The Vision of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College (OLSH College) attests to us being 'heart people who are faith filled, reverence relationships, pursue excellence and touch the hearts of others'.

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy gives expression to our Vision and to the College's steadfast resolve to provide a safe and pastoral environment for students. We hold the care, safety and wellbeing of our students and all children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of Catholic education, and we draw inspiration from the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the Gospel.

Regnet Christus! May Christ Reign!
In aeternum (forever)

Purpose and Scope

This policy supports the commitment of OLSH College to a strong and sustainable child safety culture. It provides an overview of our 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**).

The policy informs our College 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.

It provides an outline of the policies, procedures and strategies developed to keep students safe from harm, including all forms of abuse in our College environment, on campus, online and in other locations provided by the College.

This policy:

- applies to all OLSH College staff and to Board members, volunteers, contractors and other service involved with the College, whether or not they work in direct contact with students
- applies in all physical and online environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided by the College for a student's use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers
- should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and codes – refer to the Related Policies below (section 8).

This policy addresses the Victorian Government's Four Critical Actions for schools (PROTECT):

1. Responding to an emergency
2. Reporting to authorities/referring to services
3. Contacting parents/carers
4. Providing ongoing support

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

OLSH College 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 College.

We are guided by our Catholic faith and our unwavering belief in the unique and unrepeatable dignity of every person in our care. We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and young people.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our College environments. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

Particular attention is given to the needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) 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 our College, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in OLSH College has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices and to seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

Roles and Responsibilities

College Leadership Team

Our College Leadership Team – comprising the Principal, the Deputy Principal Learning and Teaching, the Deputy Principal Faith and Mission, the Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing and the College Business Manager – 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. This includes ensuring that the College’s risk management systems and procedures are consistently applied, monitored and reviewed.

The Principal:

- ensures effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are followed
- models a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and 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 College community, including at Leadership Team meetings, staff meetings and College Board meetings
- facilitates regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing, prevention of abuse 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 authorities.

College Staff, Contractors and Volunteers

All College staff, contractors and volunteers:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the College
- act in accordance with the College’s Child Safety Code of Conduct and related policies
- understand and enact, where required, the PROTECT guidelines: Four Critical Actions for Schools to identify and respond to child abuse
- 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.

College Board Members

In performing their roles and responsibilities, College Board members:

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader College community
- address child safety matters as a regular agenda item at Board meetings
- undertake annual training on child safety provided by the College
- provide feedback in relation to, and act in accordance with, the College's Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to Board members
- monitor the implementation and efficacy of this policy and all related child safety policies and procedures
- provide reports, as required, to members of the company
- provide support to the Principal and Leadership Team members, as required, in managing complaints and reportable incidents.

College Child Safety Leader

The Deputy Principal (DP) Student Wellbeing is the College's Child Safety Leader. The (DP) Student Wellbeing engages in additional specialised training with respect to child safety and protection issues.

The key duties of the Child Safety Leader are outlined in the Appendix and include being a point of contact for people within the community who wish to raise child safety concerns. The Child Safety Leader is also responsible for promoting child safety within the College and assisting in coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

Our Child Safety Program

Our Child Safety Program relates to all aspects of College operations. It establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to create and maintain a child safe environment and culture. The Program embeds in the College a child safety and wellbeing program supported by Catholic identity, Ministerial Order 1359 and the Victorian Child Safe Standards. Its key elements are described below.

Child Safety Code of Conduct

The College's Child Safety Code of Conduct outlines the standards of conduct expected of all staff and adults engaged in College activities, inclusive of volunteers, contractors, external education providers, religious and chaplains. It is published on our website.

The Code:

- is included as part of induction training for new staff, volunteers and contractors

- informs students, parent/carers and other persons associated with the College of the expected behaviour for our staff and associates in both physical and online environments
- supports and informs our policies and reporting procedures should breaches of the Code be suspected or identified
- is accounted for in employment contracts to ensure compliance
- is signed by employees, volunteers and contractors to ensure there is a shared understanding of and commitment to the College's child-safe culture and practices.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

Child Safety Policies

We have a suite of child safety policies that address matters such as:

- the indicators of child abuse and other harm
- reportable conduct allegations and investigations
- procedures for responding to and reporting child safety incidents or concerns;
- mandatory and non-mandatory reporting obligations
- external reporting agencies (e.g. DFFH Child Protection, The Orange Door, the Police, the Social Services Regulator)
- record keeping and confidentiality
- child and family violence information sharing schemes
- resource materials that support, encourage and enable staff, volunteers, contractors, parents/carers and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters.

Our key child safety policies are published on the College website and are listed below (section 8).

Managing Risks to Child Safety and Wellbeing

The College recognises the importance of maintaining an appropriate risk management culture and of applying systematic risk management processes to all College activities, functions and operations.

We identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity-specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site activities (school camps and excursions) and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child safety, alongside actions in place to manage those risks.

A consultative approach is used to ensure that all possible child safety and wellbeing risks are clearly identified and effectively managed. The College Leadership Team is responsible for ensuring that an effective communication and consultation process occurs and that:

- risk management systems and procedures are consistently monitored and reviewed
- changes are made as new risks arise and/or in response to incidents
- staff and associates contribute to risk management discussions, assessments and action plans
- ensuring full and accurate reporting of child safety and wellbeing matters.

Establishing a Culturally Safe Environment

At OLSH College we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. We recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our planning, policies and activities.

We build a strong school culture to support cultural inclusion by:

- beginning assemblies and whole-school liturgies with an Acknowledgement of the Traditional Owners of the lands on which the College is located
- speaking with respect and confidence about Aboriginal culture, knowledge systems and people
- building school-wide knowledge of Aboriginal histories, cultures, perspectives, values, skills and attitudes, beginning with local content and then knowledge from Aboriginal cultures across Australia. This includes embedding Aboriginal histories and cultures in the curriculum as demonstrated in the Victorian Curriculum F–10
- engaging with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education officers for advice about creating culturally inclusive learning environments
- recognising key national events and anniversaries that include Harmony Day (March), National Sorry Day (May), National Reconciliation Week (May–June) and NAIDOC Week (first week of July).

Student Empowerment

To support child safety and wellbeing at OLSH College, we encourage students to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support to ensure a sense of belonging. We inform students of their

rights through our Respectful Relationships Policy and our Child Safety: Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy.

The College applies consequences for inappropriate student behaviour that maintain the dignity and psychological and physical safety of students (refer our Student Anti-Bullying Policy and our Respectful Relationships Policy).

The College has a very proactive pastoral system whereby the Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing works closely with the Heads of House addressing the needs of the students. Each student belongs to a House Learning Mentor Group where there is a mix of students from Years 7-12 who meet each morning in homeroom for 10 minutes and some pastoral care lessons. Learning Mentors have responsibility for monitoring the wellbeing of each student in their care. The College Counsellor also ensures that student welfare and safety are paramount.

College staff explicitly teach personal and social skills, skills to keep students safe, as well as skills required to enact the school-wide expectations. We assist students to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and we encourage them to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers. We ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe (for example, their Learning Mentor, Head of House, DP Student Wellbeing/Child Safety Leader, College Counsellor, or any other staff member).

In addition, we:

- ensure that the College's Child Safety Leader is clearly identifiable to students through providing information within the student planner, on the College E-noticeboards, and via the electronic learning management system (CANVAS);
- ask students about their experiences of making complaints, and act on feedback from students in the complaints process;
- where necessary, make improvements following a complaint to address the source of the problem.

The College has several key policies and documents published on our website that provide students and families with information on how to report safety and wellbeing concerns.

They are our:

- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Child Protection Reporting Responsibilities Policy
- Child Safety: Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy
- Complaints Resolution Policy
- Cyber Safety Policy
- Student Anti-Bullying Policy

When the College is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct or abuse of a student, we listen to the complainant's account and take them

seriously, check our understanding of the complaint, support the student and keep them (and their parents and carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

Family Engagement

Our families, carers and the College community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, we are committed to providing families and carers with accessible information about our child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We do this by:

- Posting key policies and procedural guidelines on the College website
- Informing families, carers and the College community via our newsletter about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety
- Providing families and carers with information about promoting children's safety and wellbeing via newsletters and parent information sessions
- Discussing the needs of students through parent- student-teacher interviews
- Organising interpreters and translations to engage families and carers from non-English speaking backgrounds in conversations about our child safety strategies
- Providing diverse methods of communication for/with families, including email, social media, meetings and workshops, and using their responses to inform our communications approach
- Reminding the College community about the shared roles of parents, carers and school staff in creating a positive environment for learning
- Hosting community workshops on child safety and wellbeing topics
- Providing families and carers with take-home information to help them talk to their children about safety and wellbeing at home
- Communicating with and appropriately involving families and carers at all stages of the process if a concern is raised or a complaint is made.

Diversity and Equity

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every student has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal children and young people

- students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and young people with disabilities
- students unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- international students
- students who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Some of our strategies and actions to address challenges that students experience due to their diverse attributes include:

- Communicating that discrimination and bullying are not tolerated. If incidents of bullying or discrimination occur, the incident is addressed in line with our Student Anti-Bullying Policy
- Letting students know they can safely raise concerns or report incidents that occurred at school and outside school
- Providing counselling and support to vulnerable students and their families to confirm their needs are being met
- Engaging genuinely with students, finding out what matters to them, what they know and don't know about safety, and what they need to be safe and feel safe all the time
- Offering activities that promote inclusion and diversity within the College community
- Responding to family violence in a way that is culturally responsive, safe, child-centred, inclusive and non-discriminatory
- Providing staff and volunteers with training to identify and address racism, bullying and discrimination
- Seeking out expert advice as needed to support inclusion, such as an occupational therapist or speech pathologist
- Committing to ensure our facilities enable the inclusion of students of all abilities.

Suitable Staff and Volunteers

At OLSH College, we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

Staff recruitment

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children Check evidence or equivalent background check such as a Victorian Institute of Teaching registration
- collect and record:
 - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
 - the person's history of working with children
 - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

Staff induction

All newly appointed staff are expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program includes a focus on:

- our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document)
- our Child Safety Code of Conduct
- our Child Protection Reporting Responsibilities Policy
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that College Leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

Ongoing supervision and management of staff

All staff engaged in child-connected work are supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. Staff are monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work, including regular reviews of the status of Working with Children Checks and staff professional registration requirements, such as Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people is managed promptly and in accordance with our policies and legal obligations.

Volunteers and contractors

All volunteers and contractors participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program and are required to comply with the expectations outlined in our Child Safety Code of Conduct.

Child Safety Knowledge, Skills and Awareness

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our staff participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Staff training is delivered at least annually and includes:

- guidance on our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices
- the completion of an online training module on reporting obligations, including mandatory reporting, reportable conduct and other legal obligations
- how to recognise indicators of child harm, including harm caused by other children and students
- how to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing
- how colleagues who disclose harm will be supported
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students

- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations.

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing, for example, training for our volunteers, is tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

Complaints and Reporting Processes

We foster a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, carers and associates of the College to raise and report their concerns regarding child safety. This makes it more difficult for harm, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff, contractors and volunteers must follow our Child Protection Reporting Responsibilities Policy that covers reporting matters such as:

- reportable conduct allegations and investigations
- mandatory and non-mandatory reporting obligations
- external reporting agencies (e.g. DFFH Child Protection, Child First/The Orange Door, the Police, the Social Services Regulator)
- record keeping and confidentiality
- child and family violence information sharing schemes with proscribed Information Sharing Entities (ISEs)
- Staff education around reportable conduct including identification of conduct that requires immediate action for safety, internal escalation to the Social Services Regulator (SSR) notification within 3 business days.

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant College staff have been informed, we ensure all staff identify and respond to child abuse in accordance with the Victorian Government's 4 Critical Actions.

Where applicable, the College's Complaints Resolution Policy, Student Anti-Bullying Policy and/or Cyber Safety Policy are also enacted in addressing complaints and concerns.

We are committed to ensuring all College staff understand their obligations to report child safety incidents and concerns. The College will:

- educate staff on the Reportable Conduct Scheme during the induction process and through ongoing training
- immediately act to ensure the child's safety and wellbeing and report the matter internally to the Reportable Conduct Team and relevant authorities
- provide clear guidelines on the reporting process and ensure it is accessible to all College staff.

The College will ensure any allegations of Reportable Conduct involving Staff are addressed promptly and appropriately. We will:

- report any allegations of reportable conduct to the Social Services Regulator (SSR) within three business days and
- conduct thorough investigations and take appropriate actions based on the findings.

Communications

We are committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the College community through a range of measures and media that include:

- posting key policies and procedural guidelines on the College website
- displaying PROTECT posters around the College
- providing updates regarding our policies and practices in our school newsletter
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at leadership meetings, staff meetings and Board meetings.

Record Keeping, Privacy and Information Sharing

The College is committed to best practice record keeping. All internal and external reports of child safety incidents and concerns, as well as any other responses by the College, are recorded and stored in accordance with security and privacy requirements and legislation pertaining to child safety. Our practices are outlined in the College's Child Safety Record Keeping Policy.

Information and records relating to incidents, complaints, responses and decisions are treated as confidential, except where the sharing or distribution of information and/or records is mandated by statutory requirements or principles of natural justice. In this regard, if the complaint involves conduct that is serious and/or potentially criminal, any legal obligations to report relevant information to external authorities will over-ride confidentiality.

The College is a prescribed Information Sharing Entity (ISE), meaning that, where legislated requirements are met, the College is able to share and/or confidential information with other ISEs to promote child wellbeing or safety. This occurs via the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) or the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS).

Policy and Program Review

The College is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Safety Program. The program is regularly reviewed for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child protection related laws, regulations and standards. The College is committed to actively seeking, actioning and incorporating into our policies feedback from students, families, staff, volunteers and contractors. We communicate widely throughout the College community any adjustments or amendments.

Appendix

OLSH College Child Safety Leader Role Responsibilities

Related Policies

Child Protection Reporting Responsibilities Policy
Child Safety Code of Conduct

Supporting documents

Child Safety and Wellbeing Procedures
Child Safety and Wellbeing Recordkeeping Procedures

Related documents

PROTECT Identifying and Responding to Abuse – Reporting obligations Policy
PROTECT Procedure: Responding to all forms of child abuse
PROTECT Procedure: Responding to offences under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
PROTECT Procedure: Responding to student sexual offending
Reportable Conduct Policy
Strategic Communications Policy

Legislation and Standards

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) – including three criminal offences under this Act:

- **Failure to disclose offence:** Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 has an obligation to report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence.
- **Failure to protect offence:** This 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 an adult 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.
- **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.

Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)
Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic)
Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
Public Records Act 1973 (Vic)
Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)

This Policy and supporting documents are guided by all relevant legislative and regulatory requirements.

Policy History and Review

At OLSH College, 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 regularly reviewed to ensure it is working in practice and updated to accommodate changes in legislation or circumstance.

Responsibility	Principal and College Board Policy and Governance Committee
Reviewed and revised	March 2018, July 2022, July 2026
Next review date	July 2028

Appendix

OLSH College Child Safety Leader

The Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing is OLSH College's Child Safety Leader.

Name	Position	Contact No.	Email address
Ms Dina Oro	Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing	(03) 8520 9200	doro@olsh.vic.edu.au

Role Responsibilities

Promoting a child safety and wellbeing culture

- Build awareness of child safety at staff and parent meetings, through newsletters and staff bulletins
- Ensure the College's child safety policies and procedures are current and fit for purpose, publicly accessible, known and implemented
- Promote a culture of listening to students and families and acting on their child safety concerns
- Support staff and volunteers to focus on the child safety needs of vulnerable students.

Providing support and guidance

- Be a point of contact for child safety concerns for staff, volunteers, students and parents/carers
- Provide guidance to students, staff and volunteers on child safety policies and procedures
- Work with College Leadership to respond to child safety incidents
- Maintain current skills and knowledge to support child safety and wellbeing, including:
 - child -focused complaint processes, mandatory reporting obligations and the **Four Critical Actions**
 - student rights, participation and empowerment
 - Aboriginal cultural safety and inclusive practices to meet students' diverse needs
 - child safety risk management, including online safety
 - child safety information sharing and record keeping obligations
 - working with relevant agencies to refer students and families to appropriate support
 - keeping across emerging research and best practice guidance in child safety and wellbeing.

Training and education

- Provide child safety induction programs for new school staff, volunteers and College Board members
- Provide child safety training for school staff, volunteers and College Board members
- Ensure mandatory reporters complete the annual mandatory reporting online training
- Provide child safety updates and information to staff and volunteers, as needed.

Monitoring, reviewing and reporting

- Record child safety complaints and concerns, and analyse trends as needed
- Coordinate reviews following significant safety incidents and recommend improvements
- Maintain the school's child safety risk register with the College Leadership Team
- Coordinate child safety policy and practice reviews in consultation with the College community
- Maintain detailed, accurate and secure written records of concerns and referrals.