



WHITEFRIARS
CATHOLIC COLLEGE FOR BOYS

Child Safety Policy Summary Document

July 2016

Belong. Believe. Become.

1. Introduction

Whitefriars College reflects the tradition of the Carmelites who actively seek to live in God's presence by walking in the way of Jesus Christ. The College provides a Catholic Education for boys where excellence is valued and all are challenged to achieve their best. This education aims to empower young men to live with integrity through experiences of community and prayer and through a sensitivity to justice. It assists them to take their place in society as valued individuals, alive with the wisdom of the Gospel.

We BELONG to a Whitefriars community that:

- embodies a belief in the Catholic faith that has Christ as its centre
- takes inspiration from Carmelite spirituality
- values and respects the richness of the land and the people who came before us
- develops skills for lifelong learning
- nurtures and celebrates the diverse gifts and unique contributions of each individual
- values collaboration and fosters positive, supportive relationships.

We BELIEVE in a Whitefriars community that:

- celebrates God's presence through prayer and the Eucharist
- forms its students in the tradition of the Catholic and Carmelite ethos
- instils a sense of social justice, service and understanding
- provides opportunities for spiritual, social, intellectual, emotional and physical growth
- acknowledges and fosters the faith and learning journey of each individual
- values excellence and encourages all to reach their potential
- provides holistic education through a broad and vibrant curriculum
- challenges and develops all through diverse and enriching curricular and co-curricular pathways.

We BECOME a Whitefriars community that:

- forms 'Gentle-men' of compassion, service and tolerance grounded in Catholic faith and Carmelite tradition
- develops young men with active and creative minds and with the courage to act on their beliefs
- challenges all to be active participants in the learning process
- fosters a sense of understanding and compassion for others
- encourages all to live with integrity and contribute positively to society
- engenders a sense of self-worth, confidence and wisdom in each individual contributes to the development of a just and sustainable world.

At Whitefriars College we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of our school. Our commitment is drawn from and inherent in the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the gospel ([CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety](#)).

The person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ's teaching: that is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school (Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, n. 9).

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the strong commitment of **Whitefriars College** to the care, safety and wellbeing of all students at our school. It provides an outline of the policies, procedures and strategies developed to keep students safe from harm, including all forms of abuse in our school environment, on campus, online and in other locations provided by the school.

This policy takes into account relevant legislative requirements within the state of Victoria, including the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in [Ministerial Order No. 870](#).

This policy applies to school staff, including school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy.

3. Principles

Whitefriars College has a moral, legal and mission-driven responsibility to create nurturing school environments where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard and they are safe and feel safe ([CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety](#)).

The following principles underpin our commitment to child safety at Whitefriars College.

- All students deserve, as a fundamental right, safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect.
- Whitefriars College works in partnership with families and the community to ensure that they are engaged in decision-making processes, particularly those that have an impact on child safety and protection.
- All students have the right to a thorough and systematic education in all aspects of personal safety, in partnership with their parents/guardians/caregivers.
- All adults in our school, including teaching and non-teaching staff, clergy, volunteers, and contractors, have a responsibility to care for children and young people, to positively promote their wellbeing and to protect them from any kind of harm or abuse.
- The policies, guidelines and codes of conduct for the care, wellbeing and protection of students are based on honest, respectful and trusting relationships between adults and children and young people.
- Policies and practices demonstrate compliance with legislative requirements and cooperation with the Church, governments, the police and human services agencies.
- All persons involved in situations where harm is suspected or disclosed must be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect.
- Staff, clergy, volunteers, contractors, parents and students should feel free to raise concerns about child safety, knowing these will be taken seriously by school leadership.
- Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained, with information being provided to those who have a right or a need to be informed, either legally or pastorally.

4. Definitions used in this Policy

Child: A child or a young person enrolled as a student at the school.

Child abuse includes:

- (a) any act committed against a child involving:
 - (i) a sexual offence
 - (ii) an offence under section 49B(2) of the **Crimes Act 1958** (grooming)
- (b) the infliction, on a child, of:
 - (i) physical violence
 - (ii) serious emotional or psychological harm
- (c) serious neglect of a child. ([Ministerial Order No. 870](#)).

Child safety encompasses 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 incidents or allegations of child abuse. ([Ministerial Order No. 870](#))

Child neglect: The failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and wellbeing. ([Safe Schools Hub](#)).

Child physical abuse: Generally, child physical abuse refers to the non-accidental use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Physically abusive behaviours include shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning. The fabrication or induction of an illness by a parent or carer (previously known as Munchausen syndrome by proxy) is also considered physically abusive behaviour. ([Safe Schools Hub](#)).

Child protection: Statutory services designed to protect children who are at risk of serious harm. ([Safe Schools Hub](#)).

Child sexual abuse: Any sexual activity between a child under the age of consent (16) and an adult or older person (i.e. a person five or more years older than the victim) is child sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse can also be:

- any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult in a position of power or authority over them (e.g. a teacher); the age of consent laws do not apply in such instances due to the strong imbalance of power that exists between young people and authority figures, as well as the breaching of both personal and public trust that occurs when professional boundaries are violated
- any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult family member, regardless of issues of consent, equality or coercion
- sexual activity between peers that is non-consensual or involves the use of power or coercion
- non-consensual sexual activity between minors (e.g. a 14-year-old and an 11-year-old), or any sexual behaviour between a child and another child or adolescent who, due to their age or stage of development, is in a position of power, trust or responsibility over the victim. Sexual activity between adolescents at a similar developmental level is not considered abuse. ([Safe Schools Hub](#)).

Mandatory Reporting: The legal requirement to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect is known as mandatory reporting. Mandated persons include teachers, nurses, police, psychologists, psychiatrists and medical practitioners. ([Safe Schools Hub](#)).

Reasonable Belief: 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. This process of considering all relevant information and observations is known as forming a 'reasonable belief'. A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumour or speculation. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- (a) a campus of the school
 - (b) online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
 - (c) other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).
- ([Ministerial Order No. 870](#)).

School staff means an individual working in a school environment who is:

- (a) directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
- (b) a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)
- (c) a minister of religion. ([Ministerial Order No. 870](#)).

5. Policy Commitments

All students enrolled at Whitefriars College have the right to feel safe and be safe. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we do not and will not tolerate child abuse. We aim to create a child-safe and child-friendly environment where children are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety. There is particular attention paid to the most vulnerable children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with a disability.

Our commitment to our students

- (a) We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people enrolled in our school.
- (b) We commit to providing children and young people with positive and nurturing experiences.
- (c) We commit to listening to children and young people and empowering them by taking their views seriously, and addressing any concerns that they raise with us.
- (d) We commit to taking action to ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse or harm.
- (e) We commit to teaching children and young people the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing.
- (f) We commit to seeking input and feedback from students regarding the creation of a safe school environment.

Our commitment to parents and carers

- (a) We commit to communicating honestly and openly with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children.
- (b) We commit to engaging with, and listening to, the views of parents and carers about our child-safety practice, policies and procedures.
- (c) We commit to transparency in our decision-making with parents and carers where it will not compromise the safety of children or young people.
- (d) We commit to acknowledging the cultural diversity of students and families, and being sensitive to how this may impact on student safety issues.
- (e) We commit to continuously reviewing and improving our systems to protect children from abuse.

Our commitment to our school staff (school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy)

- (a) We commit to providing all Whitefriars College staff with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles. This will include regular and appropriate learning opportunities.
- (b) We commit to providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm policy and procedures in relation to child safety and young people's protection and wellbeing. This will include annual training in the principles and intent of the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct, and staff responsibilities to report concerns.
- (c) We commit to listening to all concerns voiced by Whitefriars College staff, clergy, volunteers, and contractors about keeping children and young people safe from harm.
- (d) We commit to providing opportunities for Whitefriars College school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.

6. Responsibilities and Organisational Arrangements

Everyone employed or volunteering at Whitefriars College 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 students is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make. ([CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety](#)).

The school has allocated roles and responsibilities for child safety as follows.

Overseeing the implementation of this policy will be the Deputy Principal (Students) who will act on behalf of the Principal of the College. It is the role of the Deputy Principal to ensure that the ethical imperative of keeping children safe is recognised, understood, valued, and upheld by all staff, volunteers, and community members within the school. To assist with implementation, monitoring and reviewing child safety matters the Principal and Deputy Principal (Students) will work closely with the Student Management Team, Principals Leadership Team and staff involved in Student at Risk meetings.

It is the specific role of the Deputy Principal (Students) to ensure that all staff are knowledgeable of their requirements in regards to Mandatory Reporting and that they are aware that all issues need to be handled sensitively and promptly. General Staff meetings and the Monday morning staff briefing are all avenues that assist in the communication and dissemination of information that involves issues of child safety.

It is the Deputy Principal (Students) who is usually the conduit between Government bodies such as the Department of Human Services, Child FIRST, the Police, the Court system, and the school. It

is the role of the Deputy Principal (Students) to assist members of the school community, who have concerns in regards to an individual student's safety, in reporting these concerns to the appropriate authority.

The Deputy Principal (Students) will also be responsible for the reviewing of school procedures in order to gauge the effectiveness of the College in managing and revising Whitefriars College's child safe strategies and to ensure that the policy is distributed to all members of the College community and is visible to the wider community on our College website.

6.1 Guide to Responsibilities of School Leadership

The principal, the Deputy Principal (Students), the school governing authority and school leaders at Whitefriars College recognise their particular responsibility to ensure the development of preventative and proactive strategies that promote a culture of openness, awareness of and shared responsibility for child safety. Responsibilities include:

- creating an environment for children and young people to be safe and to feel safe
- upholding high principles and standards for all staff, clergy, volunteers, and contractors
- promoting models of behaviour between adults and children and young people based on mutual respect and consideration
- ensuring thorough and rigorous practices are applied in the recruitment, screening and ongoing professional learning of staff
- ensuring that school personnel have regular and appropriate learning to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters
- providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm legislative obligations, policy and procedures in relation to child and young people's protection and wellbeing
- ensuring the school meets the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in [Ministerial Order No. 870](#).

7. Reporting and Responding

Whitefriars College records any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and stores the records in accordance with security and privacy requirements. Our school complies with 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.) and the recommendations of the [Betrayal of Trust](#) report.

Child protection reporting obligations fall under separate pieces of legislation with differing reporting requirements.

Our school's **Child Protection – Reporting Policy** updated on June 2016, sets out the actions required under the relevant legislation when there is a reasonable belief that a child at our school is in need of protection or a criminal offence has been committed, and provides guidance and procedures on how to make a report.

Our policy assists staff, volunteers and families to:

- identify the indicators of a child or young person who may be in need of protection
- understand how a 'reasonable belief' is formed
- make a report of a child or young person who may be in need of protection

- comply with mandatory reporting obligations under child protection law and their legal obligations relating to criminal child abuse and grooming under criminal law.

Our school has also established internal processes to ensure that appropriate action is taken to respond to concerns about the wellbeing and/or safety of a student.

Whitefriars College, in partnership with families, will ensure 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 staff, children, young people and families are taken seriously and their concerns are addressed in a just and timely manner. Children and young people are also provided with the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing.

To ensure all concerns, suspicions and allegations of harm to a child the College Principal will:

- Appoint a Child Safety Officer whose role is to receive all complaints made by staff, volunteers, parents or children (Deputy Principal (Students))
- Handle complaints in line with the existing College Mandatory Reporting Policy.

Our complaints and disclosure processes are outlined and detailed in the following policies and procedures:

- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Dealing with complaints policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Safe Schools Policy (students)
- Student Wellbeing Policy
- Students at Risk Policy.

8. Risk Management

At Whitefriars College we are committed to proactively and systematically identifying and assessing risks to student safety across our whole school environment, and reducing or eliminating (where possible) all potential sources of harm. We document, implement, monitor and periodically review our risk management strategies for child safety and ensure that the strategies change as needed and as new risks arise.

Whitefriars College consults with 'Dynamiq' to help identify and eliminate safety risks. Our Occupational, Health & Safety Committee in conjunction with the College Leadership Team will work through Student Management Teams; Student at Risk meeting and general staff meetings to monitor and develop risk management strategies.