



Child Safety Policy

(February 2019)

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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 that 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.



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.

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, with or in the presence of, a child involving:
 - (i) a sexual offence
 - (ii) sexual misconduct (below the criminal threshold but still posing significant risk to children)
 - (iii) 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) any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.
- (d) 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. ([Student Wellbeing 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. ([Student Wellbeing Hub](#))

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

Child sexual abuse: Any sexual activity with/or in the presence of a child under the age of 18 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. ([Student Wellbeing Hub](#))

Mandatory Reporting: The legal requirement to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect is known as mandatory reporting. Reportable allegations can be made by anyone, including students or parents. The College will need to identify, investigate and report all allegations of reportable conduct against a child at the school allegedly committed by a person engaged by the school (employee, contractor, volunteer, minister of religion).

Reasonable Belief: It is more than suspicion, speculation or rumour. It is when a person in the circumstances believe that reportable conduct had occurred. A person is likely to have a reasonable belief when they have:

- observed the conduct themselves;
- heard it directly from a child that the conduct occurred;
- received information from another credible source (including another person who witnessed the reportable conduct or misconduct).

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 to learning diversity, 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 practices, 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 engaged by Whitefriars College (employee, volunteer, contractor, religious members) 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.

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 to implement, monitor



and review child safety processes and procedures. It is the role of the College Principal and the Leadership Team 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. It is the specific role of the Deputy Principal (Students) to ensure that all staff are knowledgeable of their requirements in regards to identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools (including mandatory reporting).

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](#).

At Whitefriars College, we expect school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy to proactively ensure the safety of students at all times and to take appropriate action if there are concerns about the safety of any child at the school. All school staff must remain familiar with the relevant laws, the code of conduct, and policies and procedures in relation to child protection and to comply with all requirements. We have developed a "Staff, Volunteers and Contractors Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct" which recognises the critical role that school staff play in protecting the students in our care and establishes clear expectations of school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy for appropriate behaviour with children in order to safeguard them against abuse and or neglect.

7. Student Safety and Participation

At Whitefriars College we actively encourage all students to openly express their views and feel comfortable about giving voice to the things that are important to them.

We teach students about what they can do if they feel unsafe and enable them to understand, identify, discuss and report on child safety. We listen to and act on any concerns students, or their parents or carers, raise with us.

To empower students in looking after their own safety, bodies such as the Student Representative Council (SRC) meet regularly with the Deputy Principal (Students) to voice concerns or forward suggestions that can



make Whitefriars College a safer learning environment. Students can also directly approach the Principal, Chaplain, Deputy Principals, House Leaders, Pastoral Care Teachers or Counselling team to seek advice or receive assistance.

Whitefriars College also promotes a Child Safe School environment through college assemblies and through curriculum development as well as the Pastoral Care System and Wellbeing Program.

8. 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 Policy – Reporting Obligations** 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 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.

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

- Child Protection Policy – Reporting Obligations
- Parents Concerns Resolution Policy



- Student Wellbeing and Management Policy

9. Screening and Recruitment of School Staff

Whitefriars College will apply thorough and rigorous screening processes in the recruitment of employees (Refer to the CECV Industrial Relations website for templates & documents), volunteers and contractors. Our commitment to child safety and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements for such employee, contractor and volunteer positions, and all applicants are provided with copies of the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct and the Child Safety Policy.

When recruiting and selecting employees, contractors and volunteers, we ensure to:

- confirm the applicant's Working with Children Check and National Police Check status and/or professional registration (as relevant)
- obtain proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications
- verify the applicant's history of work involving children
- obtain references that address the applicant's suitability for the job and working with children.

We have processes for monitoring and assessing the continuing suitability of school staff, including regular reviews of the status of Working with Children Checks and staff professional registration requirements such as Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration.

10. Child Safety – Education and Training for School Staff

Whitefriars College provides employees, volunteers and clergy with regular and appropriate opportunities to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters. This includes induction, ongoing training and professional learning to ensure that everyone understands their professional and legal obligations and responsibilities, and the procedures for reporting suspicion of child abuse and neglect.

Whitefriars College runs a thorough Induction Program for all new staff and conduct Professional Learning sessions with current staff to update them on all changes to the Child Safety Standards.

11. 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 Pty Ltd' to help identify and eliminate safety risks. Our Occupational, Health & Safety Committee works in conjunction with the College Leadership Team to monitor and develop risk management strategies.

12. Relevant Legislation

- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.)
- *Working with Children Act 2005* (Vic.)



- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic.)*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic.)*
- *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*
- *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.)*

13. Related Policies

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

This Policy is not to be considered a stand-alone policy. It is to be implemented with:

- Child Protection Policy – Reporting Obligations
- Student Wellbeing and Management Policy
- Students Computer Use Policy
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy

This policy will also work in conjunction with current referring procedures for student support from the Deputy Principal (Students), the College Psychologists, and House Leaders.

14. Review of this Child Safety Policy

At Whitefriars 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.

15. References

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) 2016, *A safe and nurturing culture for all children and young people in Catholic schools*.

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) 2013, CECV.

Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, [*The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*](#), Vatican.

Student Wellbeing Hub 2018, [*National Safe Schools Framework Glossary*](#), Australian Government Department of Education and Training.

State of Victoria 2016, [*Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools: Ministerial Order No. 870*](#), Education & Training Reform Act 2006, Victorian Government Gazette No. S2.

Victorian Government Department of Justice 2016, [*Betrayal of Trust Implementation*](#).