

Child Safeguarding Policy



Child Safeguarding Policy

This Child Safeguarding Policy implements, and is to be read and understood in conjunction with:

- the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 870
- the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.

This Child Safeguarding Policy has been approved by the Leadership Team on 8 November 2021 and is to be reviewed in November 2022.

The Child Safeguarding Policy is published on our College's public website and provided to new Staff, and to Direct Contact Volunteers and Direct Contact Contractors at induction. It is also made available to Regular Contractors and Regular Volunteers prior to their engagement with the College. It is also communicated through other mediums such as the College newsletter, compliance training modules and staff meetings.

Purpose

Our Child Safeguarding Policy was written to demonstrate the strong commitment of the College to child safety, and to provide an outline of the policies and practices that we have developed to keep our students safe, including from abuse or other harm.

It is an overarching policy that provides the key elements of our approach to the College as a child safe organisation and sets the tone for the College's entire Child Safeguarding Program.

The Child Safeguarding Policy provides the framework for:

- the implementation of the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 870
- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child protection, safety and wellbeing within the College
- the creation of a safe and supportive College environment and a positive and robust child safe culture
- the promotion and open discussion of child safety issues within the College
- compliance with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection and child safety in Victoria.

Scope

The College's Child Safeguarding Policy applies to all adults in the College community, including Staff, Volunteers, Contractors, External Education Providers and Visitors.

This policy applies in all College environments, both physical and online, and on-site and off-site College grounds (e.g. camps and excursions).

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

All children and young people who come to Lavalla Catholic College have a right to feel and be safe. We are committed to providing a child safe and child friendly environment, where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and are able to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.

We have a zero tolerance for child abuse and other harm and are committed to acting in students' best interests and keeping them safe from harm.

The College regards its child safeguarding responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintaining a child safe culture.

Child Safeguarding Standards

In addition to implementing the Victorian Child Safe Standards, the College's commitment to child safety is based on the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, which sets out the following overarching standards that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect students from abuse and other harm. These standards are similar to the Victorian Child Safe Standards.










Requiring compliance with these additional Child Safeguarding Standards is one of the strategies employed by Marist Schools Australia to embed a culture of child safety at the College.

The College has also developed specific child safe principles and values relevant to its own specific circumstances and that guide our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect students from abuse and harm.

The National Catholic Safeguarding Standards

The National Catholic Safeguarding Standards expand on the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, specifically for Catholic settings. They set out 10 overarching standards that guide the development of a child safe culture for Catholic entities. Compliance with the NCSS is mandatory for all Catholic entities.

The NCSS are:

 Standard 1 7 Committed leadership, governance and culture	 Standard 6 18 Effective complaints management
 Standard 2 10 Children are safe, informed and participate	 Standard 7 21 Ongoing education and training
 Standard 3 11 Partnering with families, carers and communities	 Standard 8 23 Safe physical and online environments
 Standard 4 13 Equity is promoted and diversity is respected	 Standard 9 25 Continuous improvement
 Standard 5 14 Robust human resource management	 Standard 10 26 Policies and procedures support child safety

Lavalla Catholic College's Child Safe Principles and Values

All children and young people who come to Lavalla Catholic College have a right to feel and be safe. We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. We are committed to providing a child safe and child friendly environment, where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and are able to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.

We have a zero tolerance for child abuse and other harm and are committed to acting in students' best interests and keeping them safe from harm.

The College regards its child safeguarding responsibilities with the utmost importance and is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintaining a child safe culture.

Each member of the College community has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role that they play individually, and collectively, to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all students is at the forefront of all that they do, and every decision that they make.

Children and Young People's Rights to Safety, Information and Participation

Lavalla Catholic College is a child safe and child-centred organisation. Our environment is friendly and welcoming to all children and young people.

We actively seek to include students in decisions that affect them. This includes decisions about organisational planning, delivery of services, management of facilities, and classroom learning and assessment environments.

We ensure students know about their rights to safety, information and participation. We recognise the importance of friendships and support from peers. We actively seek to understand what makes students feel safe in our organisation and regularly communicate with students about what they can do if they feel unsafe.

Parents/Carers, Families and Community Involvement at the College

The College recognises that parents and carers have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their children. We ensure they participate in decisions affecting their children.

We ensure families and relevant communities know about the College's operations and policies, including its Child Safeguarding Policy and the Child Safe Codes of Conduct, record keeping practices, risk management, and complaints and investigation processes.

We actively seek to include families and relevant communities in decisions about organisational planning, delivery of services, management of facilities, and classroom learning and assessment environments.

We build cultural safety at the College through partnerships with relevant communities.

Valuing Diversity in the College Community

Our College values diversity and does not tolerate any discriminatory practices. To achieve this, we:

- support the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families

- support the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families
- welcome students with a disability and their families and act to promote their participation
- welcome students and families of diverse sexuality and act to promote their participation
- seek to recruit a workforce that reflects a diversity of cultures, abilities and identities
- ensure all Staff, Direct Contact Volunteers and Direct Contact Contractors have training about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, disability, culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and those with particular experiences or needs
- have a physical environment that actively celebrates diverse cultures and recognises cultural difference
- commit to ensuring our facilities promote the inclusion of students of all abilities.

Our Child Safeguarding Program: Embedding a Culture of Child Safety

Our Child Safeguarding Program itself, along with training Staff and relevant Volunteers and Contractors on its requirements, and regular reviews and continuous improvement of the Program, is one of the strategies employed by the College to embed a culture of child safety at the College.

Lavalla Catholic College is committed to the effective implementation of our Child Safeguarding Program and ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated. We adopt a risk management approach by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety risks based on a range of factors including the nature of our College's activities, physical and online environments and the characteristics of the student body.

Our Child Safeguarding Program relates to all aspects of child safety and protecting children from abuse, and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to create and maintain a child safe environment and culture at the College. It includes:

- Child Safe Codes of Conduct
- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and other harm and associated key indicators of child abuse and other harm
- clear procedures for responding to and reporting child safety incidents or concerns internally, and for responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse or other harm
- strategies to support, encourage and enable Staff, Volunteers, Contractors, External Education Providers, parents/carers and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters
- procedures for recruiting and screening members of the Leadership Team, Staff, Volunteers and Contractors
- procedures for reporting to external agencies, including Mandatory Reporting to Child Protection, Reportable Conduct and Reporting to Police
- pastoral care strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe
- strategies to support and encourage the participation and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and students with disability
- child safeguarding training
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse or other harm to protect, support and assist children

- guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality
- policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Victorian Child Safe Standards and the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.)
- a system for continuous review and improvement.

As a part of Lavalla Catholic College's induction process, all Staff as well as all Volunteers and Contractors are required to complete induction in our child safeguarding policies, practices and procedures. All Staff, as well as Direct Contact Volunteers and Direct Contact Contractors also receive refresher and ongoing child safeguarding training at least annually.

Staff, Direct Contact and Regular Volunteers, and Direct Contact and Regular Contractors are supported and supervised by the College's Child Safeguarding Officers and Leadership Team to ensure that they are compliant with the College's approach to child safety.

Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns to the College

Our Child Safeguarding Program provides detailed guidance for Staff, Volunteers and Contractors on how to identify key indicators of child abuse and other harm and how to report child safety incidents or concerns internally at the College. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child safety incidents or concerns to relevant external authorities.

We recognise that some individuals, particularly children, face additional vulnerabilities to child abuse and other harm, as well as additional barriers to disclosing child safety incidents or concerns. Our Child Safeguarding Program provides guidance on identifying additional vulnerabilities and barriers, and contains strategies for supporting these individuals to participate in the College community and enabling them to disclose child safety incidents or concerns to the College.

Students at the College are provided with information about and encouraged to use multiple pathways to raise child safety incidents or concerns about or at the College. These include informal and formal ways, an 'anonymous' way, and through external child advocacy or child safety organisations.

Parents/carers, family members and other community members who have child safety concerns or who suspect that a child or young person associated with the College may be subject to abuse or other harm can contact:

- the College's Senior Child Safeguarding Officer, Doug Doherty, by phoning 51 74 5272 or 51 74 7355 or emailing dohedou1@lavalla.vic.edu.au; or
- the Principal or, if the concern relates to the Principal, the MSA Regional Director.

Students, parents/carers, family members and other community members can also raise child safety incidents or concerns through the College's Complaints Handling Policy (located under Policies on the College website).

Any person can also contact the Senior Child Safeguarding Officer, the Principal or MSA Regional Director if they have concerns regarding the College's leadership in relation to child safety.

Communications will be treated confidentially on a "need to know basis".

Whenever there are concerns that a child or young person is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.

Support for Students, Families and Staff Following Child Safety Incident or Disclosure

Child safety incidents or concerns can cause trauma and significantly impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children, as well as on their families. In addition to reporting and referral to the relevant authorities, the College plays a central role in addressing this trauma and has a duty of care to ensure that students feel safe and supported at College.

The range of measures employed by the College to support students affected by a child safety incident or concern will depend on:

- the degree of severity of the situation
- the risk of harm to the student
- the capability and willingness of the parent / carer to protect the student from harm
- for students with a disability, the chronological age, developmental age and cognitive functioning of the student
- any additional measures that may be required for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and international students.

Child Safeguarding Officers will work with the student and their family to develop a Student Support Plan. Support strategies that could be considered for students and/or their families might include offering or organising referrals to internal or external support, such as a College Counsellor, bi-cultural workers and/or translators, or an external support agency and/or child advocacy organisation which specialises in supporting children and young people impacted by abuse or other harm.

Former students who may disclose historical child safety incidents or concerns from their time at the College are also offered similar support by the College.

Witnessing a child safety incident or receiving a disclosure of abuse or other harm can be a distressing experience for Staff, Volunteers and Contractors involved. The College assists impacted Staff, Volunteers and Contractors to access necessary support.

Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns

Our Child Safeguarding Program sets out the policies, procedures and practices that the College will follow to any child safety incident or concern involving a student, College Staff, Volunteer, Contractor or Visitor, or other person connected to the College or the College environment. These are summarised in our public facing Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents and Concerns and public facing Procedures for Managing Child Safety Incidents or Concerns At or Involving the College or its Staff Members (both located under Child Safeguarding Policies on the College website).

Responsibilities for Child Safeguarding at the College

Child Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All adults in the College community have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of students. Specific responsibilities include:

The College's Child Safeguarding Officers

A number of senior staff members are nominated as the College's Child Safeguarding Officers. Our Child Safeguarding Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child safety and protection issues. They are a point of contact for raising child safety concerns within the College. They are also responsible for

championing child safeguarding within the College and assisting in coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

Contact details for our Child Safeguarding Officers are set out below:

Name	Position	Contact No.	Email Address
Brett Van Berkel	Deputy Principal – Learning & Teaching	51 74 5272 51 74 7355	vanbbre1@lavalla.vic.edu.au
Claire Fabris	Assistant Principal – Staff Wellbeing & Development	51 74 5272 51 74 7355	fabrcla1@lavalla.vic.edu.au
Robyn Rebbechi	Assistant Principal – Catholic Identity & Mission	51 74 5272	rebbrob1@lavalla.vic.edu.au
Belinda Gathercole	Counsellor	51 74 5272 51 74 7355	gathbel1@lavalla.vic.edu.au
Megan Marks	Counsellor	51 74 5272 51 74 7355	markmeg1@lavalla.vic.edu.au
Bec McMahon	Counsellor	51 74 5272 51 74 7355	Bec.McMahon@lavalla.vic.edu.au
Kristen Webber	Counsellor	51 74 5272 51 74 7355	webbkri1@lavalla.vic.edu.au

The Senior Child Safeguarding Officer

Lavalla Catholic College has also appointed Doug Doherty, Deputy Principal – Student Wellbeing & Operations as the College's Senior Child Safeguarding Officer. The Senior Child Safeguarding Officer is contactable by phone on 51 74 5272 or 51 74 7355 or by emailing dohedou1@lavalla.vic.edu.au.

The Senior Child Safeguarding Officer has additional child safeguarding responsibilities, such as being a first point of contact for all child safety concerns or queries for the wider community and coordinating the College's response to child safety incidents in consultation with the Principal, the Leadership Team and Marist Schools Australia.

The Council of the Australian Conference of the Association of St Marcellin Champagnat

The Council of the Australian Conference of the Association of St Marcellin Champagnat (the Association Council) is the College's governing body. Through the Marist Association Professional Standards Committee, the Association Council is ultimately responsible for reviewing and approving the College's Child Safeguarding Program.

Marist Schools Australia

Marist Schools Australia (MSA) is responsible for implementing all Child Safeguarding policies and protocols across the College.

The Association Council has delegated its functions relating to the management and implementation of the College's Child Safeguarding Program to MSA.

Marist Schools Australia National Director

The Chief Executive Officer of MSA is the MSA National Director. The MSA National Director is responsible for ensuring that each MSA-governed school complies with relevant legislation, the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards and other requirements of the Catholic Church and the Association Council.

The Principal has delegated authority from the MSA National Director for operational management of the College, including the management and implementation of the College's child safeguarding policies and procedures.

The MSA Regional Director

The MSA Regional Director is responsible for ensuring that the College complies with relevant legislation, the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards and other requirements of the Catholic Church and the Association Council.

The Principal

The Principal is responsible, and will be accountable for, the operational management of the College, and the Child Safeguarding Program. The Principal is responsible for taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Safeguarding Policy and the College's Child Safeguarding Program is implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child safe culture is maintained within the College.

The Principal of the College is accountable to the MSA Regional Director.

Staff Members

All Staff are required to comply with our Child Safeguarding Policy and Child Safe Codes of Conduct, be familiar with our Child Safeguarding Program and understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse and other harm, and WWC checks. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key indicators of abuse and other harm, to be observant, and to raise all child safety incidents and concerns with one of the College's Child Safeguarding Officers.

Volunteers

Most Volunteers engaged by the College are engaged in "child-connected" work within the meaning of Ministerial Order 870. Ministerial Order 870 defines "child-connected work" as work authorised by Marist Schools Australia and performed by an adult in the College's environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

All Volunteers at the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of students in the College environment.

All Volunteers are required to comply with our Child Safeguarding Policy and Child Safe Codes of Conduct. Direct Contact and Regular Volunteers are required to understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse, grooming and other harm.

It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key indicators of child abuse, grooming and other harm, to be observant, and to raise all child safety concerns with one of the College's Child Safeguarding Officers.

Contractors

Many, but not all, Contractors engaged by the College are engaged in "child-connected" work within the meaning of Ministerial Order 870. Ministerial Order 870 defines "child-connected work" as work authorised by Marist Schools Australia and performed by an adult in the College's environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

All Contractors engaged by the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of students in the College environment.

All Contractors engaged by the College are required to comply with our Child Safeguarding Policy and Child Safe Codes of Conduct. Direct Contact and Regular Contractors are required to understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse, grooming and other harm. The College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the Contractor.

External Education Providers

An External Education Provider is any organisation that the College has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the College. The delivery of such a course may take place on College premises or elsewhere.

All External Education Providers engaged by the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of students in all College environments. All External Education Providers engaged by the College are required by the College to comply with our Child Safeguarding Policy and our Child Safe Codes of Conduct. Lavalla Catholic College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the External Education Provider.

Child Safe Human Resources Management

Lavalla Catholic College applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of Staff and relevant Volunteers. Our recruitment procedures comply with the College's Child Safe Human Resources Management and ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to engage the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children and young people. All Staff, and relevant Volunteers and Contractors, are required to maintain a valid WWC (working with children) clearance.

The College ensures that the College Leadership Team, Staff and Direct Contact Volunteers and Direct Contact Contractors undergo child safeguarding induction, and ongoing education and training as part of our commitment to safeguarding children from harm.

Staff, Direct Contact Volunteers and Direct Contact Contractors are subject to regular supervision and performance monitoring whilst engaging with students.

The College ensures that professional development programs for Staff include child safeguarding education and training programs.

Child Safe Risk Management

The College recognises the importance of a risk management approach to minimising the potential for child abuse or harm to occur and we use this information to inform our policies, procedures and activity planning.

The College has developed a comprehensive Risk Management Program to assist in the identification, assessment and management of child safety risks in all College environments.

Record Keeping

The College has a Child Safeguarding Record Keeping policy and is committed to best practice record keeping.

In accordance with our policy, and as required by our Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns, all internal and external reports of child safety incidents and concerns, as well as any other responses by the College are recorded using the Responding to an Incident, Disclosure or Suspicion of Child Abuse or Other Harm Template.

In maintaining records of child safety incidents or concerns, the College maintains confidentiality and privacy for students and families in accordance with federal and state privacy legislation.

Policy and Program Review

Lavalla Catholic College is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Safeguarding 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 this Program, feedback from students, families, the wider College community, Staff, Volunteers and Contractors, and will communicate any adjustments or amendments widely throughout the College community.

Non-Compliance with Our Child Safeguarding Policy

Lavalla Catholic College enforces this Child Safeguarding Policy and our Child Safe Codes of Conduct. In the event of any non-compliance, we will instigate a review that may result in a range of measures including (depending on the severity of the breach):

- remedial education
- counselling
- increased supervision
- the restriction of duties
- suspension or
- in the case of serious breaches, termination of employment, contract or engagement.