

St Columba's Engaging Families and Caregivers in Child Safety Policy

St Columba's School Ballarat (St Columba's) operates with the consent of the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat and is owned, operated and governed by Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL).

Rationale

Catholic education is an active partnership between families and caregivers (carers and guardians) and school, where this relationship is recognised as the first and ongoing educators of their children and young people. Schools and families and caregivers partner in the shared privilege and responsibility for children and young people's faith formation, learning, safety and wellbeing.

St Columba's holds the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of the entire school community. This commitment is drawn from and inherent to 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 purpose of this policy is to outline the strategies and actions to be taken at St Columba's to ensure that families, caregivers and other members of the school community are informed about relevant child safety and wellbeing matters and that they are involved in the promotion of child safety and wellbeing at the school.

This Policy considers the specific requirements of the Child Safe Standards as set out in [Ministerial Order No. 1359](#).

At St Columba's the following beliefs underpin the commitment to family and caregiver engagement:

- Families and caregivers should have the opportunity to input into decisions relating to child safety and wellbeing which affect their child
- Open and accessible communication with families and caregivers and other members of the school community about the school's approach to child safety and wellbeing is a fundamental responsibility of the school
- All members of the school community should have access to current and relevant information relating to child safety and wellbeing
- Families and caregivers and other members of the school community must have the opportunity to provide input into the development and review of the school's policies and practices relating to child safety and wellbeing
- All members of the school community have the right to be informed of the governance principles and operational structures that underpin child safety and wellbeing at the school.

Policy Statement

This Policy applies to all members of the school community. It should be read in conjunction with related DOBCEL and school policies, procedures and guidelines including:

DOBCEL Child Safety Framework
DOBCEL Child Safe Governance Policy and Procedure
DOBCEL Safeguarding Children and Young People: Code of Conduct
DOBCEL PROTECT: Reporting and Responding Obligations Procedures for Schools (including Mandatory Reporting)
DOBCEL Child Safe Risk Management Guidelines
St Columba's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
St Columba's Student Empowerment and Participation Policy
St Columba's Bullying Prevention (including Cyberbullying) Policy
St Columba's Diversity and Equity Policy
St Columba's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures

St Columba's is committed to ensuring that families and all members of the school community are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing. St Columba's implements the following strategies and actions to ensure compliance with the *Ministerial Order 1359* commitment to:

- providing opportunities for families and caregivers to participate in decisions related to child safety and wellbeing which affect their child
- open and accessible communication with families and caregivers and other members of the school community about the school's approach to child safety and wellbeing
- enabling families and community members to contribute to the development and review of policies and practices of the school related to child safety and wellbeing
- ensuring that families and caregivers and the school community are informed about the policies and practices of the school related to child safety and wellbeing.

Strategies/actions utilised by school leadership

The principal and school leaders at St Columba's recognise their particular responsibilities to communicate and engage with families and caregivers and other members of the school community in relation to issues regarding child safety and wellbeing. Strategies and actions used to carry out this responsibility include:

- utilising this policy to inform and guide curriculum planning and practices
- supporting staff, through appropriate professional learning, to strengthen their communication and engagement skills and to understand the value and importance of effective communication and engagement
- identifying opportunities for parents and caregivers to have input into decisions that affect their child or young person's safety and wellbeing
- ensuring that existing policies and practices relating to child safety and wellbeing are made publicly available so that they are easily accessible to families and caregivers and other members of the school community
- engaging with families, caregivers and other members of the school community to collaboratively develop and periodically review policies and practices relating to child safety and wellbeing
- creating opportunities to ensure that members of the school community are adequately informed about the school's operations and governance relating to child safety and wellbeing

Strategies/actions utilised by school staff, volunteers, contractors and those in religious ministry

School staff, volunteers, contractors and those in religious ministry at St Columba's also have a responsibility to support the school governing authority and school leaders in communicating and engaging with families, caregivers and other members of the school community regarding child safety and wellbeing. Strategies and actions used to carry out this responsibility include:

- creating and maintaining open lines of communication with families, caregivers and other members of the school community, particularly with respect to child safety and wellbeing matters
- liaising with parents and caregivers in relation to any concerns and/or decisions that affect their child and giving them the opportunity to contribute to any discussions, where appropriate
- ensuring that parents, caregivers, and others in the school community are updated and involved in child safety and wellbeing
- ensuring school staff, volunteers, contractors and those in religious ministry act in accordance with the principles set out in this policy when managing issues relating to child safety and wellbeing.

Strategies used by parents and caregivers and members of the broader school community

Parents, caregivers and members of the broader school community at St Columba's also have a responsibility to support the school governing authority and school leaders in communicating and engaging with the school regarding child safety and wellbeing. Strategies and actions used to carry out this responsibility include:

- engaging with and maintaining open communication with the school community, particularly with respect to child safety and wellbeing matters
- liaising with the school in relation to any concerns and/or decisions that affect children or young people and working in a spirit of cooperation with the school.
- ensuring that school personnel are updated on any matters pertaining to child safety and wellbeing regarding children in their care

- ensuring parents, caregivers and members of the broader school community act in accordance with the principles set out in this *Child Safety Framework* when managing issues relating to child safety and wellbeing.

Policy Review and Approval

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's two-year review cycle of its child safety practices.