



Mount Lilydale Mercy College

Engaging Families in Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

1. RATIONALE

- 1.1. Catholic education is an active partnership between family and school, where families are recognised as the first and ongoing educators of their children. Schools and families partner in the shared privilege and responsibility for children and young people's faith formation, learning, safety and wellbeing

Mount Lilydale Mercy College holds the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of the College. Our 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 belief that each person is made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1: 27), and that the inherent dignity of all being recognised and fostered, is the basis for protection of children and young people. Our Mercy Values of Compassion, Justice and Respect compel us to act to assist others, especially the young and vulnerable.

The purpose of this Policy is to outline the strategies and actions that the College has in place to ensure that families, and other members of the College community, are informed about relevant child safety and wellbeing matters and are involved in the promotion of child safety and wellbeing at the College.

This Policy takes into account the specific requirements of the Child Safe Standards as set out in Ministerial Order No. 1359.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1. This Policy applies to employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy (referred to as workplace participants within this policy).

3. PRINCIPLES

- 3.1. As a Catholic school in the Mercy tradition, the College has a moral, legal and mission-driven responsibility to create a nurturing school environment 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 and wellbeing:
- All students deserve, as a fundamental right, safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect.
 - Our 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 wellbeing and protection.
 - All students have the right to a thorough and systematic education in all aspects of personal safety, in partnership with their families.

- 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, to identify and mitigate risks related to child safety and wellbeing in the school environment 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.
- All members of the College community (including students and their families) are kept informed of child safety and wellbeing matters (where appropriate) and are involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
- Staff, clergy, volunteers, contractors, families and students should feel free to raise concerns about child safety and wellbeing, knowing these will be taken seriously by College leadership.
- Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained, with information being provided to those who have a right or a need to be informed, either legally (including under legislated information sharing schemes being Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) or Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS)) or pastorally.

4. DEFINITIONS

Workplace Participants means an individual working within a school environment who is:

- directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
- a contracted service provider, consultant, student on placement or volunteer engaged to perform child-related work for the College
- a minister of religion, a religious leader or an employee or officer of a religious body associated with the College (Ministerial Order No. 1359).

5. POLICY STATEMENT

The following principles underpin the College's commitment to family engagement:

- Families should have the opportunity to participate in decisions relating to child safety and wellbeing which affect their child.
- The College engages and openly communicates with families, and other members of the College community about our child safe approach.
- All members of the College community should have access to information relating to child safety and wellbeing.
- Families, and other members of the College community must have the opportunity to provide input into the development and review of the College's policies and practices relating to child safety and wellbeing.
- Families, and other members of the College community, have the right to be informed about the operations and governance of the College in relation to child safety and wellbeing.

The College is committed to ensuring that all members of our College community are kept informed about relevant child safety and wellbeing matters and are involved in the promotion of child safety and wellbeing at the College.

We implement the following strategies and actions to ensure that we are able to meet this commitment.

Strategies / actions used by College leadership

The Principal, governing authority and leaders at the College recognise their particular responsibilities to communicate and engage with families, carers and other members of the College community in relation to issues regarding child safety and wellbeing. Strategies and actions used to carry out this responsibility include:

- utilising the College's *Engaging Families in Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy* to inform and guide curriculum planning, policies and practices
- supporting workplace participants 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 families to participate in decisions that affect their child'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 other members of the College community
- engaging with families, and other members of the College community to collaboratively develop and periodically review policies and practices relating to child safety and wellbeing
- creating opportunities to ensure that members of the College community are adequately informed about the school's operations and governance relating to child safety and wellbeing

Strategies / actions used by College workplace participants

College workplace participants also have a responsibility to support the College's governing authority and leaders in communicating and engaging with families and other members of the College 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 and other members of the College community, particularly with respect to child safety and wellbeing matters
- liaising with families 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 families and others in the College community are updated and involved in child safety and wellbeing
- ensuring they act in accordance with the principles set out in this Policy when managing issues relating to child safety and wellbeing

6. RELATED POLICIES/DOCUMENTS

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- PROTECT Policy: Identifying and Responding to Abuse – Reporting obligations
- Reportable Conduct Policy
- Mercy Education Policy 6.09 Child Safety
- Mercy Education Code of Conduct (Employees and Volunteers)
- Mercy Education Parent Code of Conduct
- Mercy Education Policy 1.07 Privacy

REVIEW HISTORY

| Version | Date Released | Next Review | Author | Authorised by: |
|---------|---------------|-------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 2.0 | August 2023 | 2024 | Deputy Principal Pastoral Care | MLMC Advisory Council |

Version control added to policy commencing with V2.0 All previous versions are called 1.0 and have been archived and stored accordingly

Note: *Implementation Guidelines is a separate document which outlines the procedures needed to implement the policy.*