



Rationale

The Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL) Board is committed to:

- zero tolerance of child abuse;
- listening to and empowering children and young people; and
- keeping children and young people safe.

The DOBCEL Board maintains governance oversight of DOBCEL Schools. DOBCEL maintains a management arm to ensure that DOBCEL Schools are safe for children and young people and are places where children and young people can flourish.

The DOBCEL Child Safety policies, procedures, documents, and templates are approved by the DOBCEL Board and ratified by the Member, the Bishop of Ballarat. The documents provide the principles and key elements of DOBCEL's approach to managing its responsibilities and obligations for the care, safety, and welfare of students in DOBCEL Schools to minimise the risk of the abuse of children and young people. All DOBCEL Schools must ensure their child safety policies and procedures implemented at school level are consistent with these DOBCEL policies and procedures.

DOBCEL is committed to supporting its schools to take a proactive role in the care, wellbeing and protection of children and young people.

The DOBCEL Board has particular responsibilities for the safeguarding of children and young people as required by Ministerial Order No. 870: Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools (MO 870). This places accountability for managing the risk of child abuse with the DOBCEL Board. Consistent with MO 870, the DOBCEL Board, requires schools owned and operated by DOBCEL to have appropriate arrangements to regulate the conduct and decisions of school staff for the benefit of its students. These arrangements include implementing and complying with the DOBCEL Child Safe Policies and having clear and comprehensive procedures and reporting mechanisms. The objective is for the DOBCEL Board and the wider school community to be confident in each school's capacity to make and implement appropriate decisions, with child safety as a guiding principle.

The DOBCEL Board is cognisant of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (National Principles) that has been endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The DOBCEL Board understands that the Victorian Government is currently reviewing the Victorian Standards to

better align with the National Principles, however in the interim the Ministerial Order 870: Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools (MO 870) remain in operation and mandatory for schools in Victoria. Therefore, our Child Safety Standards policies and procedures reflect the current requirements in Victoria being the MO 870.

This policy demonstrates the strong commitment of the DOBCEL Board to the care, safety and wellbeing of all children and young people in accordance with its obligations as the governing authority of DOBCEL schools. It outlines the policies approved by the DOBCEL Board and the procedures and strategies that all DOBCEL Schools must develop and adopt to keep children and young people safe from harm.

This policy takes into account relevant legislative requirements within the state of Victoria including the specific requirements of MO 870 relevant to the obligations of a governing authority of schools.

Definitions

Child: A child or a young person in attendance within the school environment.

Child abuse includes:

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

Child Information Sharing Scheme permits information sharing entities (including schools) to **request** or **disclose** information about any person for the purpose of promoting the wellbeing or safety of a child or group of children.

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 - abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse. ([Ministerial Order No. 870 - Child Safe Standards - Managing the risk of child abuse in schools.](#))

Child neglect includes a failure to provide the child with an adequate standard of nutrition, medical care, clothing, shelter or supervision to the extent that the health and physical development of the child is significantly impaired or placed at serious risk. ([PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#))

Child physical abuse: Generally, consists of any non-accidental infliction by any person of physical violence on a child. ([PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#))

Child sexual abuse occurs when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve that child in sexual activity. It can include a wide range of sexual activity and does not always involve physical contact or force. ([PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#))

Emotional child abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats, or by witnessing family violence. ([PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#))

Grooming is when a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later date. It can include communication and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent/carer. ([PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#))

Mandatory Reporting: The legal requirement under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)* to make a report to the designated authority in order to protect children from harm relating to physical and sexual abuse. The principal, teachers, medical practitioners, nurses, student counsellors and those in religious ministry are mandatory reporters under this Act. ([PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#))

PROTECT Protocol is a joint, cross-sectoral protocol for use in Victorian schools. This website and protocol provide advice and resources to schools and mandated reporters on the actions to be taken to respond to suspicions or allegations of child abuse. A range of materials are available for all schools.

Reasonable Belief: When school staff, or other mandated person, 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. ([PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#))

Reportable Conduct Scheme: was created under the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic.)* and requires schools to notify the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) if an allegation of reportable conduct (a reportable allegation) is made against one of their employees.

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- Child Safe Standards -Managing the risk of child abuse in schools](#))

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- Child Safe Standards -Managing the risk of child abuse in schools.](#))

Principles

Gospel values and the principles of Catholic Social Teaching are reflected in DOBCEL policies for the care, safety, and welfare of students. These values influence both DOBCEL actions and response to promoting environments that are child safe:

Participation of all members of the Church. The Catholic Social Teaching principle of participation recognises that all members of DOBCEL school communities participate in caring for, protecting, and ensuring the safety of our children and young people. Participation speaks to empowerment and allowing voices to be heard. Promoting participation means recognising that each has something unique and important to contribute. All are called on to be active members of the local and global community.¹

*'Each of us has a part to play, a gift to share, a service to offer, for building up the Body of Christ in love.'*²

Effective participation will ensure that the talents, skills and gifts of the Holy Spirit bestowed upon ... [all] ... are utilised in the service of God and the mission of the Church. The consequence of such participation is likely to be more faithful stewardship of the mission and resources of the Church.³

Human dignity - Our common humanity requires respect for and support of the sanctity and worth of every human life. All other rights and responsibilities flow from the concept of human dignity. This principle is deemed as the central aspect of the Church's social teaching. The belief that each life has value is shared with International Human Rights which are universal, inviolable and inalienable.⁴

Common good - People are fundamentally social beings. Social, political and economic organisation has, therefore, implications for the entire community. Each social group, therefore, must take account of the rights and aspirations of other groups, and of the wellbeing of the whole human family. The common good is reached when all work together to improve the wellbeing of society and the wider world. The rights of the individual to personal possessions and community resources must be balanced with the needs of the disadvantaged and dispossessed.⁵

¹ <https://caritas.org.nz/catholic-social-teaching/participation>.

² Pope Francis 21/06/2013 <https://www.catholic.org/news/international/europe/story.php?id=51423>.

³ Implementation Advisory Group and the Governance Review Project Team, *The Light from the Southern Cross: Promoting Co-responsible governance in the Catholic Church in Australia*, A Report and Recommendations on the Governance and Management of Dioceses and Parishes in the Catholic Church in Australia, 6.1 p.56, 2020, <https://www.catholicreligious.org.au/light-from-the-southern-cross>, Accessed 02/09/2020.

⁴ *ibid*

Policy Statement

The DOBCEL Board requires that the child safety policy and practices in schools owned and operated by DOBCEL embed a culture of child safety through leadership, ensure the proactive management of child abuse risks and/or allegations of abuse, provide for child participation and empowerment and engage the whole school community in a proactive approach to the care, wellbeing and protection of children and young people.

The DOBCEL Board is committed to ensuring that child abuse reporting procedures are age-appropriate, simple and accessible for all children and members of school communities.

DOBCEL Schools take all student contributions seriously, and information about these topics will be covered through various age-appropriate care initiatives and curriculum delivery.

The DOBCEL Board is responsible for ensuring DOBCEL Schools have human resources practices that provide for child safety in the recruitment, selection, induction, and ongoing suitability of staff. Schools must implement procedures for verifying the Working with Children Check (WWCC) status of all staff/visitors, who may have direct unsupervised contact with students, to ensure that students remain safe in all school environments both internal and external to the school grounds.

A system of assurance through which risks of child abuse, and actions taken to reduce or remove these risks (risk controls), are recorded is to be in place in all DOBCEL Schools. The system is also used by the DOBCEL Board to monitor risk controls and to evaluate their overall effectiveness regularly.

Related documents

- DOBCEL Child Safe School Policy and Procedures
- DOBCEL Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct
- DOBCEL Child Safe Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedure
- DOBCEL Duty of Care: Supervision of Students Policy
- DOBCEL Child Safe Risk Management Policy and Procedure

⁵ <https://www.caritas.org.au/learn/cst/the-common-good>. See also *The Light from the Southern Cross*, *op.cit.*, p.162.



DOBCEL Child Safe Governance Procedures

Reviewed: September 2020

Ratified: January 2021

Next Review: 2023

These procedures are to be read in conjunction with the DOBCEL Child Safe Governance Policy.

DOBCEL Commitment Statement to Child Safety

All students deserve, as a fundamental right, safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect.

DOBCEL 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 not only are safe but feel safe

DOBCEL 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, in accordance with its obligations as the governing authority of schools as described in Ministerial Order No 870: Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools (MO 870).

All children and young people 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 DOBCEL Schools, including teaching and non-teaching staff, clergy, volunteers, and contractors, have a responsibility to care for children and young people, to promote their wellbeing and to protect them from any kind of harm or abuse.

Honest, respectful, and trusting relationships among adults, children and young people are foundational to a culture of child safety in schools.

Policies and practices in schools are required to demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of the student population, 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/carers, 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 only to those who have a right or a need to be informed, either legally or pastorally.

Responsibilities

THE DOBCEL BOARD

- 1) Promotes a culture of child safety, inclusion, and recognition of diversity, in accordance MO 870 and its obligations as the governing authority of DOBCELSchools
- 2) Sets Child Safety as a standing item on the Board agenda
- 3) Through its policies, procedures and actions, seeks to ensure the inclusion of children of diverse backgrounds and abilities
- 4) Requires that DOBCEL Schools develop strategies to embed a culture of child safety, allocate roles and responsibilities for achieving the strategies and inform the school community about the strategies and allocated roles and responsibilities
- 5) Periodically reviews the effectiveness of the child safe policies and strategies that the Board developed for implementation in schools and, if considered appropriate, revises those strategies
- 6) Requires DOBCEL Schools to review the effectiveness of the child safe strategies they have put into practice and ensure they remain current and appropriate
- 7) Requires DOBCEL Schools to implement the DOBCEL Child Safe Schools Policy, inform the school community about the policy and make the policy available on the school website
- 8) Obliges DOBCEL Schools to implement and make publicly available the DOBCEL Safeguarding Children and Young People: Code of Conduct
- 9) Seeks evidence from DOBCEL Schools regarding the implementation of practices for a child safe environment in school staff selection and supervision
- 10) Reviews periodically DOBCEL employment, screening and supervision policies and procedures
- 11) Requires that DOBCEL Schools implement the ***DOBCEL Safeguarding Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures***
- 12) Requires that DOBCEL Schools implement the ***DOBCEL Child Safe Risk Management and Process Policy and Procedures***
- 13) At least annually, undertakes training about the Board's individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse, current and emerging child abuse risks in the school environment and effective practice in child safety
- 14) Expects DOBCEL Schools to implement one of the DOBCEL approved child safe school curriculum frameworks
- 15) Expects DOBCEL Schools to implement the curriculum that includes the importance of inclusive and respected sexuality.

THE DOBCEL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

- 1) Reports to DOBCEL Board on the implementation of the child safety standards in DOBCEL Schools in accordance with the obligations of the governing authority under MO 870
- 2) Ensures current DOBCEL child safety policies and procedures are made available on the DOBCEL website
- 3) Refines and implements strategies to embed a culture of child safety across DOBCEL
- 4) Ensures and monitors the effectiveness of child safe strategies put into practice in DOBCEL Schools and assists principals to implement those strategies
- 5) Oversees the school staff selection and supervision practices that are in place DOBCEL Schools, aligned to [CECV Guidelines on the Employment of Staff In Catholic Schools](#)
- 6) Supervises the effectiveness of the DOBCEL Schools' use of the DOBCEL Safeguarding Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
- 7) Checks that DOBCEL Schools are monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of their risk management strategies to mitigate the risk of child abuse
- 8) Ensures adequate resources are provided for training for all DOBCEL personnel to understand their individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse, current and emerging child abuse risks in the school environment and effective practice in child safety standards
- 9) Guarantees the provision of resources to assist DOBCEL Schools in the implementation of one of the approved child safe schools curriculum frameworks and the DOBCEL Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy
- 10) Examines the training/professional learning register for DOBCEL Board members and all employees, including principals to ensure all have completed the required child safety training
- 11) Ensures appropriate processes are in place for DOBCEL Board members, employees, including principals to undertake an annual review in relation to their capability and skills for child safety
- 12) Makes sure that advertising and employment processes for DOBCEL staff and principals are consistent with CECV guidelines including position descriptions that outline responsibilities and expectations for child safety
- 13) Instructs DOBCEL school principal network meetings to include a process of review of the implementation of child safety in schools

THE WELLBEING and SAFEGUARDING STANDING COMMITTEE

(in conjunction with the DOBCEL Executive Director)

- 1) Supports the operations of the DOBCEL Board through monitoring DOBCEL Schools in relation to child safeguarding and compliance with MO870
- 2) Support DOBCEL Management to promotes a culture of safeguarding across DOBCEL entities and sets child safety as a standing item on the Standing Committee agenda
- 3) Liaises with relevant committees to deepen understanding of legislation and the operation of schools in a Child Safe Environment
- 4) Reviews policy, procedures, and school practices in light of DOBCEL's commitment to ensure the inclusion of children and young people of diverse backgrounds and abilities

- 5) Advises the DOBCEL Board in developing strategies to embed a culture of child safety at schools
- 6) Informs the DOBCEL Board on materials that have been designed to support these strategies.
- 7) Advises the DOBCEL Board by recommending revisions to child safe strategies subsequent to their periodic review
- 8) Liaises with the DOBCEL Board in monitoring the DOBCEL Safeguarding Children and Young People: Code of Conduct.
- 9) Liaises with the DOBCEL Board in monitoring and reviewing the DOBCEL Safeguarding Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedure
- 10) Liaises with the DOBCEL Board in monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of risk management strategies used by its schools to mitigate the risk of child abuse
- 11) Assists the Manager: Safeguarding and Standards in identifying appropriate training for all DOBCEL personnel to understand their individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse, current and emerging child abuse risks in the school environment and what constitutes effective practice in child safety standards
- 12) Reviews and recommends for endorsement child safe schools curriculum frameworks to the DOBCEL Board.
- 13) Identifies and monitors areas of risk associated with wellbeing and safeguarding and escalates immediately to the DOBCEL Executive Director any risks associated with child safety that require mitigation
- 14) Reviews and updates the Child Safe Risk Register annually and as new risks emerge
- 15) Review and endorse a cyclic review of all DOBCEL safeguarding policies and a process for upgrading and updating policies in relation to feedback and reports from schools as well as to changes in legislation
- 16) Assists in conjunction with DOBCEL Board, the Manager Safeguarding and Standards in all aspects of safeguarding

THE DOBCEL SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

(in conjunction with the DOBCEL Executive Director)

- 1) Ensures the DOBCEL school takes specific actions to protect children in line with MO 870 and other legal responsibilities
- 2) Promotes a culture of child safety in the school
- 3) Takes reasonable action to ensure the inclusion of children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with disabilities.
- 4) Refines and implements strategies to embed a culture of child safety at the school
- 5) Allocates roles and responsibilities for achieving the child safe strategies
- 6) Informs the school community about the strategies, and allocated roles and responsibilities
- 7) Periodically reviews the effectiveness of the strategies put into practice and, if considered appropriate, revises those strategies

- 8) Conducts student focus groups or surveys about various child safety issues. Implements the *DOBCEL Child Safe Schools Policy*, informs the school community about the policy and makes the policy available on the school's website
- 9) Ensures the school provides access to the following documents ideally on the school's website
 - a) child safe policies and procedures
 - b) roles and responsibilities in relation to child safety
 - c) a copy of the current *DOBCEL Safeguarding Children and Young People: Code of Conduct*
 - d) the procedure for reporting allegations of suspected child abuse so that it accessible to children and young people, school staff, and the wider community.
- 10) Implements the *DOBCEL Safeguarding Children and Young People: Code of Conduct* with all staff and volunteers in the school community
- 11) Implements the practices for a child safe environment in school staff selection, supervision, induction, training, and support as outlined in *DOBCEL Staff employment, Screening and Supervision Guidelines*
- 12) Implements the *DOBCEL Safeguarding Reporting Obligations Policy* and related school Procedures
- 13) Implements the DOBCEL Child Safety Risk Management Process and associated procedures
- 14) Oversees the effectiveness of risk management strategies used by the school to mitigate the risk of child abuse
- 15) At least annually, ensures that all school staff undertake training about their individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse, current and emerging child abuse risks in the school environment and what constitutes effective practice in child safety standards
- 16) Implements one of the approved child safe schools curriculum frameworks
- 17) Implements the *DOBCEL Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy*
- 18) Provides information to the DOBCEL Wellbeing and Safeguarding Standing Committee on child safety practices
- 19) Reports to the DOBCEL Board on child safety compliance via the DOBCEL Executive Director and Manager Safeguarding and Standards
- 20) Manages the child safety training register for staff, contractors, volunteers, clergy, and the School Advisory Council
- 21) Ensures child safety is a standing item for staff and School Advisory Council meetings.
- 22) Implements processes to identify specific student characteristics that may impact on child safety for individual students
- 23) Provides regular updates on child safety in school newsletter and supplies child safety materials to be displayed in staff and public areas
- 24) Supports, encourages, and enables school staff, families and children and young people to understand, identify, discuss, and report child safety concerns
- 25) Supports or assists children who disclose child abuse or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse

- 26) Puts in place a system for making, securing, and retaining records of compliance with child safety standards
- 27) Ensures advertising, recruitment, employment, and induction processes for staff are consistent with CECV guidelines including position descriptions that outline responsibilities and expectations for child safety