

De La Salle College Child Protection Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing



De La Salle College is committed to child safety:

We recognise the importance of student empowerment and participation and strive to develop the potential of those entrusted to our care. We challenge, nurture and respect all children and young people, as well as our staff, contractors and volunteers.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we have concerns about a child and young person's safety.

De La Salle College is committed to:

- being open and transparent with our community about issues relating to child safety and wellbeing matters;
- preventing child abuse, identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks;
- maintaining robust recruitment practices for all staff, contractors and volunteers;
- regularly training and educating our Staff, Contractors, Volunteers and School advisory council members on child abuse risks.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our staff, contractors, volunteers and school advisory council members to achieve these commitments. All these measures are periodically reviewed and ensure the ongoing safety of all children and young people in our care, enabling them to learn and grow in a safe environment.

We will ensure that families and children and young people have the opportunity to contribute, in an authentic way, to decisions related to child safety and wellbeing.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- ensure that children and young people with a disability are safe and can participate equally;
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

Our Staff, Contractors, Volunteers, Parents, Visitors, School Advisory Council Members and Clergy

All of our staff, contractors, volunteers, parents, visitors, school advisory council members and clergy must agree to abide by the relevant Child Safety Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when having contact with children/young people.

Training and Supervision

Training and education are important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all staff, contractors, volunteers, visitors, school advisory council members and clergy (in addition to parents/carers and children and young people) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety and wellbeing concerns. We train our staff, contractors and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff, contractors and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the diversity, cultural safety and wellbeing of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders;
- Children and young people with a disability;
- Children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- LGBTQI+ (Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex);
- Children and young people who are unable to live at home.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand De La Salle's commitment to child safety and wellbeing and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children and young people from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children and young people is safe and appropriate. Refer to the Child Safety Code of Conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Family, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children and young people. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and wellbeing and an awareness of our moral, social and legislative responsibilities. De La Salle understands that when recruiting staff, contractors and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We carry out reference checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Teachers must hold current VIT Registration, which is renewed every year, with the Police Check being renewed every five years. Non-teaching staff must hold current Working With Children Check and a Police – Check, both of which are to be renewed every five years. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision-making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history, then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

Fair Procedures for Personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children and young people is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. We strive to ensure that the decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action are thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns in line with the Commission for Children and Young People's [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#), including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide appropriate updates to children and young people and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

Privacy

All personal information obtained, considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, contractors, volunteers, visitors, school advisory council members, clergy, and parents or children and young people, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative Responsibilities

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed an offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the Principal, the Child Safety Officer or Executive Team, DFFH Child Protection, Victoria Police (if emergency), Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools and the Commission for Children and Young People (within three days);
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so;
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

Risk Management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children and young people when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children and young people.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child on social media or via personal email accounts). Staff may have contact via social media with students/parents/carers whilst on approved College Tours under groups created specifically for the Tour and deleted upon return.

Regular Review

This commitment statement will be reviewed every two years or following significant incidents if they occur.

Allegations, Concerns and Complaints

De La Salle College takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children and young people, families, staff, contractors and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred, then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child or young person states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves);
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed;
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it;
- observing suspicious behaviour.

Approval

Responsible officer:	Deputy Principal – Students
Approval body:	College Executive
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