

# De La Salle College Engaging Families in Child Safety Policy



De La Salle College is a school which operates with the consent of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne and is owned, operated and governed by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS).

## Introduction

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.

At De La Salle College, we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of our school. 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 person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ's teaching: that is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of our Catholic school (Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, n. 9).

Protection for children and young people is based upon the belief that each person is made in the image and likeness of God and that the inherent dignity of all should be recognised and fostered.

Catholic schools are entrusted with the holistic education of the child, in partnership with parents, guardians and caregivers who are the primary educators of their children. Catholic school staff therefore have a duty of care to students by taking reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions which they can reasonably foresee would be likely to result in harm or injury to the student and to work for the positive wellbeing of the child.

Under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031, protecting children is everyone's responsibility – parents, communities, governments and business all have a role to play. In Victoria, a joint protocol, Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, involving the Department of Family, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection, the Department of Education and Training (DET), the Melbourne Archdiocese of Catholic Schools (MACS) and licensed children's services, exists to protect the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. All teachers, other staff, parish priests, canonical and religious order administrators of Catholic schools within Victoria must understand and abide by the professional, moral and legal obligations to implement child protection and child safety and wellbeing policies, protocols and practices.

## Mission

De La Salle College is a Catholic College in the Lasallian tradition, enabling students in a community of faith and excellence to achieve their full potential with integrity and distinction.

*"The way you behave should be a model for those you teach."*

St John Baptist de La Salle

(Med 178.1 – Feast of St Luke, evangelist)

## Purpose

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

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

## Scope

This Policy applies to school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy. It should be read in conjunction with related school policies and procedures, including:

1. Child Safety Framework
2. Child Safety Code of Conduct
3. Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

## Principles

At De La Salle College, the following principles underpin our commitment to family engagement:

- Families and carers should have the opportunity to participate in decisions relating to child safety and wellbeing which affect their child.
- Our school engages and openly communicates with families, carers and other members of the school community about our child safe approach.
- All members of the school community should have access to information relating to child safety and wellbeing.
- Families, carers 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.
- Families, carers and other members of the school community have the right to be informed about the operations and governance of the school in relation to child safety and wellbeing.

## Policy

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

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

### Strategies / actions used by school leadership

The Principal, the school governing authority and school leaders at De La Salle College recognise their particular responsibilities to communicate and engage with families, carers 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 the De La Salle College Engaging Families in Child Safety Policy to inform and guide curriculum planning, policies 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 carers 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, carers and other members of the school community
- engaging with families, carers 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 used by school staff, volunteers, contractors and clergy**

School staff, volunteers, contractors and clergy at De La Salle College also have a responsibility to support the school governing authority and school leaders in communicating and engaging with families, carers 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, carers and other members of the school community, particularly with respect to child safety and wellbeing matters
- liaising with parents and carers 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, carers and others in the school 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.

**All personnel will promote equity and diversity through any form of engagement with children, young people, their parents and care givers, and other personnel.**

Wherever possible, personnel are required to:

- uphold and respect the rights and dignity of all people in society and to encourage children and young people to do the same and participate actively and responsibly as individuals
- ensure that their approach and interactions with children and young people are sensitive, respectful and inclusive of all backgrounds and abilities
- respect decisions that people make about their gender identity and consult and support children and young people to feel, and to be, safe
- promote an organisational culture that is inclusive and respectful of the different ways that families are formed and structured.
- where our organisation has involvement with children and young people who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, have a disability, LGBTQI+ and those who are unable to live at home, promote their safety (including cultural safety), participation and empowerment
- be sensitive to the needs and anticipate the requirements of children and young people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and diverse circumstances and be responsive to the individual needs and particular circumstances of individuals
- report any discriminatory behaviours, actions, prejudiced attitudes to Human Resources.

### **We will prioritise participatory and inclusive practices**

In ensuring equal access, inclusive practice and the right of every child and young person regardless of their circumstances to participate as active members in our programs, services and/or activities, De La Salle College will:

- ensure its programs are designed and constructed to provide equal access to a wide range of learning opportunities for all children, young people and their families

- ensure reasonable modifications or adjustments are provided so all children and young people can participate fully in our services, activities and programs with peers
- assess any new (or substantially revised) policies, programs or services for their direct impact on the lives of people from diverse circumstances prior to any decision to pursue such proposals
- any new (or substantially revised) policies or programs that impact in different ways on the lives of people from diverse circumstances shall, wherever possible, be developed by De La Salle College in consultation with people from those backgrounds. For any new (or substantially revised) policies or services, our organisation will develop a communication strategy sufficiently resourced to inform people from diverse circumstances and/or relevant cultural and linguistic backgrounds of these changes
- ensure publicly available resources and accessible information on our policies and procedures are communicated appropriately to people from a range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds
- where required, provide information in languages other than English, and through print, electronic media, and disability-appropriate methods of communication
- provide a ‘complaints/ reporting’ mechanism and policy that enables people (regardless of cultural and linguistic backgrounds) to address issues and raise concerns about De La Salle College personnel and performance
- where possible, provide for the particular needs of children and young people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds by providing language assistance through the use of interpreters or facilitators
- where possible, provide for the additional needs of children and young people in remote areas through developing outreach and community liaison arrangements
- consider diversity and cultural and sensitivities in the design and delivery of any training programs provided
- provide personnel with regular, relevant diversity and cultural sensitivity training so that they develop knowledge and skills in cultural competency
- promote diversity in the membership of our board, committees and working groups
- ensure all people have equal access to advertised positions, interviews, equipment, office accommodation, training and promotion.

In considering principles of participation, we will ensure that:

- Children and young people are listened to
- Children and young people are supported in expressing their views
- Children and young people’s views are taken into account
- Children and young people are involved in decision making
- Children and young people share power and responsibility for decision making.

### **We will ensure that all forms of communication are accessible and child-friendly**

These principles entail the following:

- Listen to young people: Listening is a fundamental part of communicating. In other words, young people should be given opportunities to make their views known about what they do or don’t want or need
- Understand the audience: It is critically important to make efforts to understand the target audience—their needs, attitudes and behaviours—before developing messages aimed at them. The diverse backgrounds of children, young people, their parents and care givers should be considered as part of this
- Encourage participation: Young people should expect to be consulted about and participate in developing communication directed to them
- Create appropriate, relevant content:
  - Be brief: Young people and children appreciate a straightforward, brief and to-the-point message
  - Send positive, aspirational messages: Often communication with children and young people is negative in nature and tone, focused on rules and logistics. Instead, consider the tone of the communication and ensure that it respects the individual it is speaking with

- Check language and images: Always pre-test communications before distributing more widely to check on audience understanding, and appropriateness of the language and images used
  - Establish what's in it for young people: Quickly establish that the communication is for young people and that it is a two-way conversation. Consider whether your communications can be created by or with young people, rather than just being a one-way channel of speaking to them. Create a conversational approach that is honest and respectful
  - Empower the audience: It is important to empower children and young people to have ownership of an issue and the conversation around it (in an age-appropriate manner). Consider safe, positive use of technology and how digital tools can support this.
- Assess all communications through a lens of inclusion, equity and diversity: commit resources to support the equity and diversity of the children and young people, including but not limited to supporting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with a disability, LGBTQI+, and those unable to live at home.

The methods used for communicating with children, young people, their parents and care givers are:

- Policies and procedures
- Organisation website
- Posters available at service delivery sites
- Welcome Packs and other information booklets
- Surveys, complaints forms or other feedback mechanisms
- Formal and informal verbal communication through events, in-person discussions, webinars, etc.

These methods will include information about our commitment to Safeguarding Children and Young People including our Child Safety Code of Conduct. Reporting policies will be made available for children and young people and their families including in developmentally appropriate language and languages used by the main communities that access our services.

At a minimum, we will commit to providing:

- Information to parents and care givers about our commitment and approach to safeguarding children and young people. This includes as a minimum, reference to our:
  - Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
  - Child Safety Code of Conduct
  - Reporting Policy
- Child-friendly versions of our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy that reflect the age, developmental stage, diversity and abilities of the children and young people to whom we deliver services. These include information to ensure children and young people are aware that they have a right to:
  - feel safe at all times, when they are participating in our services
  - tell a particular person within our organisation about any situation in which they do not feel safe
  - be taken seriously if they disclose a situation in which they do or did not feel safe.
- Child-friendly information for children about their rights, the behaviours they can expect of personnel, and the behaviours our organisation expects of them. The information reflects the age, developmental stage, diversity and abilities of the children and young people to whom we deliver services.

## External references

### Related Resources – Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools

[eXcel: Wellbeing for learning in Catholic school communities](#)

[Horizons of Hope: Vision and Context](#)

[Horizons of Hope: Families as Partners](#)

[Horizons of Hope: Wellbeing](#)

## Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed in consultation with members of the wider community as part of the school's two-year review cycle of its child safety practices.
- Update of the policy will occur if any new requirements come to hand.

Responsible director	Director, Learning and Regional Services
Policy owner	General Manager, Student Wellbeing
Approving body/individual	MACS Board
Approval date	13 April 2022
Risk rating	High
Date of next review	April 2023

POLICY DATABASE INFORMATION	
Related documents	
Superseded documents	
New policy	New