

## **CHILD SAFE POLICY: 20/5/2016**

### **1.0 PURPOSE OR RATIONALE**

St Francis of Assisi Primary School is committed to providing a Safe environment for all children and to protect them from any form of abuse or neglect. This policy has been written to demonstrate the strong commitment of the whole school community of St Francis of Assisi Primary School to Child safety. This community comprises of school leaders, staff, volunteers, contractors, students and their families. The policies that have been developed in order to ensure children in our community are safe at all times, from all forms of abuse include:

- Failure to disclose.
- Failure to protect.
- Mandatory reporting.
- Grooming.
- Working With Children Check.

#### **Catholic Identity:**

Catholic Identity is at the heart of all we do in Sandhurst schools. It captures our purpose, our values, our aspirations and our commitment. Our schools are intentionally, not incidentally, Catholic; seeking truth, balancing ideals and realities...The ultimate indicator of the quality of our schools is the extent to which our students, our people and our schools are flourishing. (Charter of Sandhurst School Improvement)

#### **Pastoral Wellbeing:**

Our school's desire to assist each student to develop a state of wholeness that comes from the integration of a healthy mind, body and spirit. Our approach is shaped by the Catholic tradition of pastoral care and the best contemporary research. It has moved beyond intervention alone to a rich approach to learning and teaching in order to develop socially and culturally capable global citizens. (Charter of Sandhurst School Improvement)

### **2.0 COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY**

All students enrolled, and any child visiting St Francis of Assisi Primary School, have a right to feel safe and be safe at all times. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we have zero tolerance to child abuse and any inappropriate behaviour directed towards children. We aim to create a child safe and child friendly environment where children feel safe and

are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety, providing them with the best opportunity to flourish as human beings.

### **Staff Commitment:**

Each staff member of a Catholic school performs an essential personal role in the teaching ministry of the Catholic Church. This goes beyond the need for professional skills and competence as staff bring to the students a realisation and knowledge of the richness and joy of a life lived in accordance with Gospel values. Therefore, within her/his particular responsibilities, the staff member undertakes to:

- 6.1. exercise a duty of care towards all students, consistent with school and Diocesan policy as well as community expectations;
- 6.2. recognise values and protect the uniqueness, potential and dignity of each student;
- 6.3. be sensitive to each student's religious, social and cultural background and affirms the richness of this diversity;
- 6.4. foster the development of each student's self concept and their ability to interact harmoniously and productively with others;
- 6.5. support students in developing increased responsibility for personal decisionmaking and action in accordance with Gospel values;
- 6.6. be committed to justice and equity for all students, in all interactions, educational opportunities and outcomes;
- 6.7. use agreed instructional and behavioural practices and interventions;
- 6.8. support and actively promote a safe and positive school environment;
- 6.9. foster relationships with students which are based on trust, honesty and integrity.

(SSEB Employment in Catholic Education, 2013)

### **3.0 CHILDREN'S RIGHTS TO SAFETY AND PARTICIPATION**

The staff and volunteers of St Francis of Assisi Primary School encourage students to express their views. We listen to their suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them. We actively encourage all students to openly express their views and feel comfortable about giving voice to the things that are important to them. We teach students about what they can do if they feel unsafe. We listen to and act on any concerns students, or their parents or carers, raise with us. St Francis of Assisi Primary School's commitment to student rights and responsibilities are detailed in our Student Wellbeing Policy and this policy ensures that the students within our community are afforded the opportunities and rights that they deserve.

### **4.0 VALUING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

At St Francis of Assisi Primary School we value and celebrate diversity, especially cultural diversity, and we do not tolerate discriminatory practices. To achieve this we:  promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students and their families.  promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) and their families.  promote the personal safety, participation and empowerment of

students with a disability and make them feel welcome and part of all aspects of school life, providing opportunity for students with disabilities to thrive.

## **5.0 RECRUITING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

St Francis of Assisi Primary School will apply the most thorough and rigorous standards in the recruitment and screening of staff and volunteers. We interview and conduct referee checks on all staff and volunteers and require police checks and Working With Children Checks (WWCC) for all staff and volunteers who will be in contact with students. Our commitment to Child Safety and our screening requirements are included in all discernment for staff and volunteer positions at the school.

The extract below from our Camp/ Excursion Policy details the rigour around volunteer selection:

### **Our Responsibilities**

- Staffing ratios provide the minimum requirements for school excursions. It is our responsibility to ensure that sufficient staff are present on excursions and camps to provide adequate supervision for students during the excursion and for each activity undertaken;
- All parents and volunteers that attend camp or excursion with staff and students are required to have a current and valid WWCC. They are also briefed prior to attending to ensure they understand their responsibilities towards the students in their care and the code of conduct for volunteering at St Francis of Assisi. All of these volunteers are signed off by the Principal and Deputy Principal to ensure their suitability to attend.

## **6.0 SUPPORTING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

St Francis of Assisi Primary School provides support and supervision to all staff and volunteers so people feel valued, respected, affirmed in their work and fairly treated. We have a Code of Conduct to provide guidance to our staff and volunteers, all of whom receive training on the requirements of the Code prior to commencement of duties.

St Francis of Assisi Primary School's Code of Conduct:

All staff and volunteers of St Francis of Assisi Primary School are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below.

### **ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS:**

All staff, volunteers and board/ school council members are responsible for supporting the safety of children by:

- Adhering to St Francis of Assisi Primary School's Child Safe policy and upholding the school's statement of commitment to child safety at all times
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- Treating everyone in the school community with respect
- Listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/ the safety of another child

- Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (eg: never questioning an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child's self identification)
- Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (eg: by having zero tolerance of discrimination)
- Promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (eg: during personal care activities)
- Ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not alone with children
- Reporting any allegation of child abuse to the school's Principal or Deputy Principal
- Understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to Mandatory Reporting and reporting under the Crimes Act 1958
- Reporting any child safety concerns to the school's Principal or Deputy Principal
- If an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child/ children are safe

#### **UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS:**

All staff and volunteers must not:

- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse
- Develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (eg: the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
- Exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (eg: inappropriate sitting on laps)
- Put children at risk of abuse (eg: by locking doors)
- Initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves such as toileting or changing clothes
- Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (eg: personal social activities)
- Use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- Express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- Discriminate against any child, including because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability
- Have contact with a child or their family outside of school without the Principal's knowledge or consent or approval from CEW (eg: unauthorised after hours tutoring, private instrumental/ other lessons or sport coaching)
- Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate

- Have any online contact with a child (including social media, email, instant messaging etc) or their family (unless necessary eg: providing families with e-□newsletters or assisting students with their school work)
- Use any personal communication channels/ device such as a personal email account
- Exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses
- Photograph or video a child without the consent of the parent or guardian
- Work with children whilst under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Consume alcohol or illegal drugs at school or at school events in the presence of children

## **7.0 REPORTING A CHILD SAFETY CONCERN OR COMPLAINT**

Our school records any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Code of Conduct, and store the records in accordance with security and privacy requirements. Our complaints and disclosure processes are outlined and detailed in the Mandatory reporting policy: Managing disclosure protocol is detailed below:

### **MANAGING A DISCLOSURE**

If a child or young person makes a disclosure to you, it is important you respond in an appropriate and supportive manner. It is also important to inform the child that there are some things you cannot keep a secret or confidential. When managing a disclosure, you should:

- stay calm and not display expressions of panic or shock
- state clearly that the abuse is not the child's fault, no matter what the circumstances are
- listen to the child
- be patient and allow the child to talk at their own pace
- use the child's language and vocabulary
- not pressure the child into telling you more than they want to
- reassure the child you believe them and that disclosing the matter was the right thing to do
- avoid going over the information time and time again; you are only gathering information to help you form a belief on reasonable grounds that you need to make a report to the relevant authority
- remember that you are not investigating the allegation. It is the role of the relevant authority to investigate the allegation once it is reported to them
- tell the child you are required to report to the relevant authority to help stop the abuse.

St Francis of Assisi's commitment to a safe environment for children: (Extract from Mandatory Reporting Policy).

St Francis of Assisi Primary School is committed to the creation of a safe, just and respectful environment that supports wellness for all members of the school community. In this, there is a moral obligation and shared responsibility to protect the most vulnerable members of the community.

St Francis of Assisi believes that, while protecting children and young people against sexual abuse is a community wide responsibility, schools have particular moral and legal responsibilities to ensure children and young people are safe in their care and to actively and intentionally work to eliminate all forms of abusive behaviours towards children.

## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

- Any complaint and/ or concern that a member of the community or staff may have is to be communicated to the Principal or Deputy Principal as is stated in the Mandatory Reporting policy. All complaints and concerns will be treated seriously and acted upon appropriately. These concerns or complaints are made to the Principal or Deputy Principal. In the event that the complaint/ concern is made to another member of staff, they will forward this on to the Principal or Deputy Principal.

## **DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE OR HARM PROCEDURE**

- Any disclosure of abuse or harm from a student at St Francis of Assisi is treated very seriously. Once reasonable belief is formed, the member of staff or parent must speak to the Principal or Deputy Principal and a report will be made. In the event that the child is believed to be in immediate danger, the police must be contacted (000).
- The Principal and Deputy Principal have been appointed as Child Safety Officers with specific responsibility for responding to any complaints made by staff, volunteers, parents or students in relation to Child Safety.

Details and procedures for staff to follow in the event that they have a complaint to report are located in the Mandatory Reporting Policy.

## **8.0 RISK MANAGEMENT**

St Francis of Assisi Primary School is committed to ensuring all children within the community are safe and have taken steps to ensure that all foreseeable risks are assessed and wherever possible, mitigated. A risk management plan has been developed and details all foreseeable risks and minimisation strategies to the children within our community.

## **9.0 RESOURCES**

- Sandhurst Resources and Policies [www.ceosand.catholic.edu.au](http://www.ceosand.catholic.edu.au)
- Charter of Sandhurst School Improvement
- Catholic Education Sandhurst Guidelines to Schools for compliance with the Working With Children Act 2005, available at [www.ceosand.catholic.edu.au](http://www.ceosand.catholic.edu.au), under Downloads, then Legal Resources for Schools'. Access requires user to be log in using the school's user- name and password.
- SSEB Policy: Staff Misconduct and/or Incompetence
- SSEB Guidelines for employers regarding allegations of Misconduct and/or Incompetence

- SSEB Guidelines for employers when a staff member is charged with an offence
- SSEB Policy: Whistleblower Protection
- SSEB Employment in Catholic Education
- Sandhurst Camp Guide
- Privacy Law: Introductory Information for Schools and CEO staff, available at [www.ceosand.catholic.edu.au](http://www.ceosand.catholic.edu.au), under Downloads, then Legal Resources for Schools'. Access requires user to log in using the school's user name and password.

#### CECV Resources

- Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, available at [http://www.cecv.catholic.edu.au/publications/StudentWellbeing/ProtectProtocol\\_011009.pdf](http://www.cecv.catholic.edu.au/publications/StudentWellbeing/ProtectProtocol_011009.pdf)
- Mandatory Reporting eLearning Module: [www.elearn.com.au/deecd/mandatoryreporting/external](http://www.elearn.com.au/deecd/mandatoryreporting/external)
- Safe and Sound Practice Guidelines, available at [www.cecv.catholic.edu.au](http://www.cecv.catholic.edu.au), under 'Industrial Relations' and then 'Legal Resources for Schools' (requires user to log in using the school's user name and password)
- Employment resources, [www.cecv.catholic.edu.au](http://www.cecv.catholic.edu.au), under 'Industrial Relations'
- OHS resources, available at [www.cecv.catholic.edu.au](http://www.cecv.catholic.edu.au), under 'Industrial Relations' CEOM Operational Guide □ Available at CEVN under 'Finance, Legal, Operations'

#### Other Church Resources

- Towards Healing: [https://www.catholic.org.au/documents/1346/towards\\_healing\\_2010\\_2](https://www.catholic.org.au/documents/1346/towards_healing_2010_2)
- Integrity in the Service of the Church: [https://www.catholic.org.au/documents/1345/integrity\\_in\\_service\\_of\\_the\\_church\\_1](https://www.catholic.org.au/documents/1345/integrity_in_service_of_the_church_1)
- Integrity in Ministry: [https://www.catholic.org.au/documents/1344/integrity\\_in\\_ministry\\_2010\\_1](https://www.catholic.org.au/documents/1344/integrity_in_ministry_2010_1)
- The Truth, Justice and Healing Council: <http://www.tjhcouncil.org.au/>
- Child Safe Standards – Department of Health & Human Services: [http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about\\_the\\_department/documents\\_and\\_resources/policies\\_guidelines\\_and\\_legislation/](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about_the_department/documents_and_resources/policies_guidelines_and_legislation/)
- Working with Children Checks: [www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren)
- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority: <http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/registration/Pages/schminstdards.aspx>
- VIT Professional Standards and Code of Ethics: <http://www.vit.vic.edu.au>

## 10.0 POLICY REVIEW

This policy is reviewed at St Francis of Assisi's every three years and we undertake to seek feedback from students, parents, carers, staff and volunteers.

Policy Ratified: 25/5/2016

Next Review date: 25/5/2019