Holy Cross Primary School New Gisborne

Child safe standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety

INTRODUCTION
Holy Cross School has an important responsibility for keeping children safe and for developing strategies to embed a culture of child safety at the school as a moral imperative and in response to the relevant requirements of Ministerial Order No. 870.

Child safety standard one (clause seven of Ministerial Order No. 870) has five specific requirements. They are that the school governing authority must:

- develop strategies to embed a culture of child safety at the school
- allocate roles and responsibilities for achieving the strategies
- inform the school community about the strategies, and allocated roles and responsibilities
- put the strategies into practice, and inform the school community about these practices; and
- periodically review the effectiveness of the strategies put into practice and, if considered appropriate, revise those strategies.

Holy Cross promotes values, expectations and standards that influences the behaviour of its members in relation to child safety. Its code of conduct for its members defines what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and its governing authority and delegates are commitment to zero tolerance of child abuse. The Parish Priest of St Brigid’s Parish Gisborne is the Cannonical Administrator of Holy Cross School and as such is the School’s Governing Authority. On a day to day basis authority for most of the practical running of the school is delegated to the principal who is assisted by leaders among the staff. This commitment is shared, openly and transparently, by all members of the school community, including staff (including school employees, contractors and volunteers), parents and families, visitors and children. This commitment is evidenced in the school’s policies and its statement of Commitment to Child Safety.

RESPONSIBILITIES
All members of Holy Cross School community have a responsibility to ensure the safety of the children who belong to our school.
At Holy Cross School the Governing Authority delegates the practical responsibility for implementing the school's Child Safety strategies to the principal and the staff, especially the school's Leadership Team. Specific responsibility for implementing child safety strategies falls under the Leadership Sphere of Student Well-being and Child Safety. Currently this sphere is being led by Mrs Jill Cannon. Although not conclusive some of the responsibilities of the Student Well-being and Child Safety Leader include:

- leading the school's child safety culture (eg coordinating the responsibilities listed below)
- developing and enhancing the school's child safety strategies
- proactively monitoring the effectiveness of child safety strategies
- coordinating reviews of the child safety strategies
- communicating the school’s child safety strategies to the school community
- training staff (including contractors and volunteers) in the school’s child safety strategies
- leading or delivering programs for children about the school’s child safety strategies
- developing policies, procedures and supporting documentation including communications and resources.

INDUCTION & TRAINING

The Student Well-being and Child Safety Leader is provided with training to assist her to fulfil the role. Examples include briefings and training provided by Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM), The Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority (VRQA) and the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT).

All staff are provided with training and professional development to assist them with understanding and carrying out their responsibilities e.g. On-Line Mandatory Reporting Module.

Training and Professional Development for staff is an on-going process and occurs throughout each year and the school leadership is mindful of its responsibilities to be abreast of current and new initiatives to promote Child Safety and to disseminate these to its staff. Screening and review of the suitability of existing staff will also occur through performance appraisal procedures.

Strict procedural routines are followed regarding employment of new staff with proper background checks and due diligence followed. A separate checklist for such due diligence is available for the school community to view which includes such things as:

- Pre-employment reference checks that include checking for child safety.
- Checking of identification for staff as part of recruitment.
- Criminal history checks and confirming currency of Working with Children Check/Victorian Institute of Teaching registration.
- Obtaining verified academic transcripts for staff as part of recruitment.
- Querying gaps in employment history

All staff visitors and contractors at Holy Cross School are provided with a code of conduct which identifies acceptable and unacceptable behaviours which they are expected to sign and abide by. A copy of the signed code of conduct is kept on file at the school.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION

Holy Cross School Leadership has a firm commitment to inform its of any changes or updates to the strategies and practices?

The Leadership communicates to the school community, including the school governing authority, about how it has put the child safety strategies into practice and the changes that are being made by:

- publishing information on the school website
- making parents aware of the school's child safety strategies via the school newsletter
- predominantly displaying information about the school’s child safety strategies in school environments (for example, school buildings, website, online forums, camp locations)
• making information about the school’s child safety strategies available at other locations including school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events
• school information sessions
• making staff aware of the school’s child safety strategies in staff meetings
• ensuring the school’s child safety strategies form part of school governing authority member, staff (including contractor and volunteer) induction processes including information about the school’s child safety strategies in school governing authority member, staff (including contractor and volunteer) training and awareness sessions
• reporting to the School Advisory Board.
• Holy Cross School will provide a report on child safety in its annual report to the community.

INCLUSION
Holy Cross School holds the care, safety and wellbeing of children as a central and fundamental responsibility of Catholic education. This 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.

Holy Cross School has a universal expectation for the protection of children. It is resolutely committed to ensuring that all those engaged in Catholic education in our school promote the inherent dignity of children and young people and their fundamental right to be respected and nurtured in a safe school environment. This is particularly so for the most vulnerable children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with a disability

RISK MANAGEMENT
• The school’s child safety strategies for all physical school environments include:
  o regularly reviewing the physical environment to ensure all risks are identified and managed
  o assessing new or changed physical environments for child safety risks
  o supervising or monitoring activities.
• The school has child safety strategies for its online environments (eg intranets, online learning systems, social media) including:
  o clear boundaries of roles between staff and children
  o proactive strategies to detect inappropriate behaviour such as online searches (Google, Facebook etc)
  o being an eSmart School
• Visitors are appropriately screened, supervised and made aware of the school’s child safety strategies.

MONITORING & REVIEW
At Holy Cross School Child safety is a standing item for discussion at meetings of the Leadership Team, Staff Meetings and meetings with the school governing authority.

Should an incident occur the Principal and Student Well-being and Child Safety Leader will investigate and take the appropriate action which will include having the school leadership team will review the School’s Child Safety Strategies the reviews are documented and recorded, including any opportunities for improvement?

Where opportunities for improvement are identified, an action plan is developed with a prompt timeframe for implementation

Outcomes of reviews are communicated to the school governing authority in a prompt and timely manner

Where opportunities for improvement are identified, the progress of implementation of action plans will be communicated to the Parish Priest allowing for oversight as the school governing authority.
The outcomes of reviews including action plans to address areas for improvement are communicated to the school community by the most appropriate means which may include:

- publishing information on the school website
- making parents aware via the school newsletter
- reporting to the School Advisory Board
- providing information in school information sessions
- making staff aware in staff meetings
- including child safety information in staff training?

**PROACTIVE PROGRAMS**

- Ensuring awareness of the child safety strategies and the allocated roles and responsibilities.
- Child safety is a standing item for discussion at staff and leadership meetings.
- Staff are trained to detect inappropriate behaviour.
- Staff are encouraged to report inappropriate behaviour.
- Positive behaviours are recognised and encouraged.
- Foster a culture of openness with approachable and supportive managers.
- Children are made aware of how to detect and report inappropriate behaviour.
- Children are encouraged to report inappropriate behaviour.
- The school has nominated contact persons that children can approach in relation to child safety.
- The school has child safety reporting procedures.
- The school provides counselling and other resources to support children.
- The school includes safety programs within the curriculum.
- The school is an accredited eSmart School

**REPORTING PROCEDURES FOR STAFF AND CHILDREN**

A separate policy for reporting for staff exists and is available for viewing by the school community. This policy and procedures comply with requirements for mandatory reporting and the three new crimes offences introduced under the *Crimes Act 2005* (Vic.).

Holy Cross School is committed to developing effective procedures for recording and securely storing allegations of abuse and safety.

Holy Cross School will develop clearly articulated steps that can be taken to ensure children are safe if an allegation of child abuse is reported and clearly defined disciplinary measures are actioned when necessary.

Any child reporting an abuse or a safety concern is provided with support and comfort in accordance with culturally safe and appropriate practices, ensuring that the child and family are supported to understand the situation.

Holy Cross School will develop a process for regular review and continuous improvement of procedures and ensure that the processes are child friendly to ensure children know who to talk to if they feel unsafe or have a concern.

**Resources and Advice**

**Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority**

**Catholic Schools**

CECV Industrial Relations (03) 9267 0228
Catholic Education Melbourne, Student Wellbeing Information Line (03) 9267 0228
The Victorian Institute of Teaching

For Victorian Teaching Profession Codes of Conduct and Ethics and information about employer responsibilities to report action taken against registered teachers in response to allegations and concerns about registered teachers. Website: www.vit.edu.au
Acknowledgements

This statement draws on advice from the VRQA who acknowledge the following organisations and individuals whose resources were consulted to prepare their advice.

- Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians, Ombudsman of New South Wales, *Principles for Child Safety in Organisations*
- Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, *Child Abuse and Neglect: Risk and Protective Factors*
- Child Matters, *Risk Factors of Child Abuse*
- Child Wise, *12 Steps to Building Child Safe Organisations*
- Government of Western Australia, Department for Child Protection 2011 *The Signs of Safety: Child Protection Practice Framework*
- NSW Government, *Risk Management*
- Queensland Government, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, *Practice Guide: Assessing Harm and Risk of Harm*
- Queensland Government, Department of Education and Training 2015, *Student Protection Policy*
- Ronken, C., Bravehearts, *Shared Responsibilities: How Can We Better Support Victims of Child Sexual Harm*
- State Government of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services 2015 *An Overview of the Victorian Child Safe Standards*
- State Government of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services, Betrayal of Trust Child Safe Organisations 2015 *Criminal Law Reform and Child Safe Standards*
- State Government of Victoria, Commissioner for Children and Young People, 2015 *What to Look for in a Child Safe Organisation*
- State Government of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services, 2015 *Good Leadership and Governance in Child Safe Organisations: Child Safe Standards Toolkit Resource One*
- Smallbone, Prof. S., School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Director, Griffith Youth Forensic Service, Griffith University, 2015, *Child Safe Schools: Can Sexual Abuse Be 'Designed Out'?*
Definitions


**Child abuse** includes—
- any act committed against a child involving—
  - a sexual offence or
  - an offence under section 49B(2) of the *Crimes Act 1958* (grooming)
- the infliction, on a child, of—
  - physical violence or
  - serious emotional or psychological harm
- serious neglect of a child.

**Child-connected work** means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

**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 child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

**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 campus of the school
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- 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).

**School staff** means:
- in a government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:
  - employed under Part 2.4 of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (ETR Act) in the government teaching service or
  - employed under a contract of service by the council of the school under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act or
  - a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary).
- in a non-government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:
  - directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
  - a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)
  - a minister of religion.

**School governing authority** means:
- the proprietor of a school, including a person authorised to act for or on behalf of the proprietor; or
- the governing body for a school (however described), as authorised by the proprietor of a school or the ETR Act; or
- the principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school, the school governing body, or the ETR Act.

Explanatory note: There is a wide variety of school governance arrangements. Depending on the way a school is constituted and operated, the governing body for a school may be the school board, the school council, or some other person or entity. The school governing authorities may share or assign responsibility for discharging the requirements imposed by this Order, in accordance with the school’s internal governance arrangements.

1. **minister of religion** has the same meaning as in the *Working with Children Act 2005*. 