Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

1. Introduction

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (**MACS**) is a company limited by guarantee established in 2021 by the Archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne to assume the governance and operation of MACS schools across the Archdiocese of Melbourne. MACS subsequently established Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Specialist Schools Ltd (**MACSS**) to provide educational services to children with special needs and Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Early Years Education (**MACSEYE**) to provide early years care and education services.

The Statement of Mission in the MACS Constitution, and the constitutions of its subsidiaries, MACSS and MACSEYE, sets out the Archbishop's expectations of Catholic schooling in the Archdiocese and provides an important context and grounding for the company and the direction which the MACS Board must always observe in the pursuit of the company's objects.

The Board must ensure that all policies and procedures concerning the operations of MACS, and its subsidiaries are consistent with the Statement of Mission and company objects, as well as any directions issued by the Archbishop from time to time.

MACS also recognises the importance of applying additional measures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all vulnerable children and young people under its care. Subsequently, MACSS and MACSEYE will assess child safety and wellbeing arrangements and implement additional measures to protect vulnerable children and young people.

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (the Policy) is structured and guided by Ministerial Order 1359 Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools (**Ministerial Order 1359**) and the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

2. Purpose

This Policy sets out MACS' commitment, strategies, practices and expectations to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people in MACS' schools and to enable the MACS Board, Executives, Principals and all other MACS staff, including contractors, and those involved in religious ministry and volunteers (**MACS Staff**) to effectively manage the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people under MACS care.

3. Scope

This Policy applies to MACS and MACS schools, including specialist schools operated by MACS subsidiary, MACSS. The Policy also applies to all MACS Staff.

4. Statement of Commitment

MACS has zero tolerance for any form of child abuse and is deeply committed to upholding and embedding the highest standards of child safety across our schools.

We are guided by our Catholic faith and the unique and unrepeatable dignity of every person in our care. We are dedicated to creating an inclusive and protective environment where every child can feel and be safe.

We are responsible for inspiring and enabling every child to flourish and enrich the world.

Child safety is a shared responsibility between MACS, MACS Staff and the wider community.

5. Principles

Guided by Ministerial Order 1359, the Victorian Child Safe Standards and our Catholic faith, the overarching principles supporting the management of child safety and wellbeing at MACS are:

- A culturally safe and inclusive environment will be established in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued, together with the inherent dignity and diversity of all children.
- Child safety and wellbeing will be embedded in governance, school leadership and decision-making practices
- Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and have a right to feel safe and be safe in the MACS school community
- Equity is upheld and diversity is respected across MACS with emphasis on the dignity of each child and young person under MACS' care
- MACS will partner with families and members of the school community to promote child safe and wellbeing practices and be active participants in decisions that impact the safety and wellbeing of their child
- MACS is committed to maintaining a safe physical and online environment for all children and young people under its care
- MACS policies and procedures foster openness so that all persons, and in particularly children and young people, may feel safe to disclose concerns or risks of harm to children and young people
- MACS Staff will be equipped with the appropriate child safety and wellbeing training to keep children and young people safe; and
- All complaints, concerns and disclosures of child abuse are taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly.

6. Child Safety and Wellbeing Framework

MACS is committed to embedding a Child Safety and Wellbeing Framework (the Framework) that is fit for purpose and provides protection to children and young people under its care. The foundation of the Framework is supported by our Catholic identity and values and the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

The approach to child safety and wellbeing is documented in the Framework document and should be referred to understand how MACS has embedded child safety and wellbeing across its practices.

7. Child Safety Knowledge, Skills and Awareness

MACS recognises that initial induction and ongoing training and awareness is critical for ensuring that MACS Staff understand their roles and responsibilities to protect and empower children and young people.

MACS Staff will participate in a range of training to reinforce their skills and knowledge to establish and maintain a child safe environment.

MACS Staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually across the organisation. Training may include but is not limited to:

- MACS child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and the Code of Conduct for MACS Staff
- completing the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by adults, children and students
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations and
- identifying and mitigating child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment.

Other learning and training on child safety and wellbeing will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities.

8. School Child Safety and Wellbeing Policies

This Policy, and all policies for child safety and wellbeing, must be published on the MACS website.

Principals in MACS schools must develop a school Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and procedures, using the approved MACS templates, to outline the child safety and wellbeing strategies and practices in place at their school.

The school's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy must be published on the school's website with other policies that support the care, safety and welfare of students in the school.

The Principal is responsible for ensuring the induction process for all School Staff and Volunteers includes child safety and wellbeing, and annual training is made available to ensure the ongoing suitability of all Staff.

Principals in MACS schools are responsible for ensuing full and accurate reporting of child safety and wellbeing matters.

9. Reportable Conduct

We are committed to ensuring all MACS Staff understand their obligations to report child safety incidents and concerns. MACS will:

- educate staff on the Reportable Conduct Scheme during the induction process and through ongoing training.
- immediately act to ensure the child's safety and wellbeing and report the matter internally to the Reportable Conduct Team and relevant authorities and
- provide clear guidelines on the reporting process and ensure it is accessible to all MACS Staff.

MACS will ensure any allegations of Reportable Conduct involving Staff are addressed promptly and appropriately. We will:

- report any allegations of reportable conduct to the Commission for Children and Young People (**CCYP**) within three business days and
- conduct thorough investigations and take appropriate actions based on the findings.

10. Continual improvement and review

MACS is committed to regularly reviewing its approach to child safety and wellbeing including a review of this Policy, compliance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards, Ministerial Order 1359 and its overarching approach to managing child safety and wellbeing risk.

Following the child safety and wellbeing review, MACS will report on the outcomes to the Principals of MACS schools. Principals will then have responsibility for ensuring that these outcomes are reported to MACS Staff, members of the school community, families and students as soon as possible through the school's usual communication channels.

11. Legislative requirements

This Policy and supporting documents are guided by all relevant legislative and regulatory requirements.

12. Recordkeeping

Child Safety and Wellbeing policies and records will be kept in line with Ministerial Order 1359 and MACS policies and procedures for information and records management. Staff and Volunteers must receive appropriate training about the collection, use, storage and disposal of child safety and wellbeing records.

Where there is any inconsistency between the Ministerial Order 1359 and MACS policies, the Ministerial Order will prevail.

All child safety and wellbeing records are to be kept in a secure manner in accordance with the MACS recordkeeping policies and procedures, which must detail the processes the school has in place to meet the Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards.

13. Definitions

Definitions of standard terms used in this Policy can be found in the Glossary of Terms.

MACS Staff

The term Staff or staff member refers to all people who carry out work in any capacity for MACS or its subsidiaries and includes MACS board directors, board committee members, employees, volunteers, consultants, contractors, those in religious ministry and school advisory council members as the context requires.

14. Related policies and documents

Supporting documents

Child Safety and Wellbeing Recordkeeping Procedures
School Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
School Child Safety and Wellbeing Procedures

Related MACS policies and documents

Code of Conduct for MACS Staff
Communications Protocol
Information and Records Management Policy – MACS offices
PROTECT Identifying and Responding to Abuse – Reporting obligations Policy
PROTECT Procedure: Responding to all forms of child abuse
PROTECT Procedure: Responding to offences under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic)
PROTECT Procedure: Responding to student sexual offending
Reportable Conduct Policy
Strategic Communications Policy

15. Legislation and standards

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) – including three criminal offences under this Act:

- **Failure to disclose offence**: Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 has an obligation to report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence.
- **Failure to protect offence**: This offence will apply where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation. A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- **Grooming offence**: This offence targets predatory conduct designed to facilitate later sexual activity with a child. Grooming can be conducted in person or online, for example via interaction through social media, web forums and emails.

Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)

Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic)
Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
Public Records Act 1973 (Vic)
Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)
Ministerial Order 1359: Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises

16. Policy information

Responsible executive	Director, Child Safety and Risk
Policy owner	General Manager, Child Safety
Approving authority	MACS Board
Assigned board committee	Child Safety and Risk Management
Approval date	26 June 2025
Risk rating	Extreme
Review by	June 2027
Publication	MACS website, CEVN, MACS office intranet

POLICY DATABASE INFORMATION	
Assigned framework	Child Safety and Wellbeing
Supporting documents	See list of supporting documents and related policies above
Superseded documents	Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy – v1.0 – 2025 Child Safety and Wellbeing Framework – v1.0 – 2021 Child Safety and Wellbeing Framework – v2.0 – 2022