



Catholic Schools Child Safe Schools

Child Safe Standard 2

A child safety policy or statement of commitment

Rationale

Developing a Child Safety policy influences the school's culture by providing principles and procedures aimed at protecting children from abuse. A public policy developed with the school community helps raise awareness of child safety in the school and in the community.

Catholic schools have a moral, legal and mission driven responsibility to create nurturing school environments where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard and where they are safe and feel safe (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd 2016).

In Brief

Standard 2 requires the school community to work collaboratively to produce a policy that provides an overview of key elements of a school's approach to creating a child-safe organisation. A Child Safety policy influences the organisational culture through an overarching set of principles that guide the development of other school policies, codes and procedures. It should set out the actions the school proposes to take related to child safety and be under a constant state of review in response to emerging evidence and practice.

The policy should include a **Statement of Commitment** to child safety affirming the school's commitment to:

- have zero tolerance for child abuse
- listen to and empowering children and young people
- keep children and young people safe.

It should also include information about reporting procedures for concerns and allegations and make reference to other relevant strategies, policies and procedures in place in the school in line Ministerial Order No. 870 (State of Victoria, Department of Education and Training 2016).

Ministerial Order Requirements

The Victorian government has introduced minimum Child Safe Standards into law to ensure that organisations providing services for children create child-safe environments. In accordance with Ministerial Order No. 870, under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic.), all Victorian schools will be required to comply with these new standards from 1 August 2016 as part of their registration requirements.

The Ministerial Order specifies the following requirements for schools regarding a Child Safe policy or Statement of Commitment:

1. The school governing authority must ensure that the school has a Child Safe policy or Statement of Commitment to child safety that details:
 - a. the values and principles that will guide the school in developing policies and procedures to create and maintain a child-safe school environment; and
 - b. the actions the school proposes to take to:
 - i. demonstrate its commitment to child safety and monitor the school's adherence to its Child Safe policy or statement of commitment;
 - ii. support, encourage and enable school staff, parents, and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters; and
 - iii. support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.
2. The school governing authority must inform the school community about the policy or statement, and make the policy or statement publicly available (State of Victoria, Department of Education and Training 2016).

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Towards Compliance (1 August 2016)

1. Develop through consultation with staff, students and parents, a new (or review the existing) Child Safety policy including:
 - The values and principles that will guide the school community in developing and implementing policies and procedures pertaining to child safety. The school mission statement and the [CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety](#) (CECV 2016) will assist schools in this process.
 - A definition of child abuse and a statement outlining the school's commitment to children's safety. The [Ministerial Order No. 870](#) or [An overview of the Victorian child safe standards](#) (State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services 2016) provide definitions.
 - Procedures for the prevention of child-abuse risks presented by both physical and online environments referencing legislative requirements and considering all implications should be given for school camps and excursions.
 - Ways in which staff, parents and children will be supported and encouraged to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters (e.g. commitment to include child safety on staff and leadership team meeting agendas; procedures and updates in newsletters; opportunities for children to discuss child safety).
 - Procedures for supporting children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.
 - Strengthened human resources and supervision practices.
 - Ways in which the school will monitor its adherence to the policy.
 - The school's commitment to the safety of all children, with specific reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with a disability.
 - Policy review procedures and dates.
2. Communicate the policy publicly on the website and in newsletters. Consider translations into relevant languages enabling access for all members of the school community.

Sustaining a Culture of Child Safety

- Incorporate the Child Safety policy in ongoing staff, volunteer and contractor induction processes and maintain records of this process.
- Enable professional learning and training of staff to build deeper understandings of child safety and prevention of abuse at the school in line with the school's stated policy.
- Use the Child Safety policy to direct school procedures and practice and inform other child-safe-related policies in the school (Social Media policy, Pastoral Care policy, Child Protection – Reporting Obligations policy).
- Ensure regular and consistent communication which models the values and principles articulated in the Child Safety policy.
- Review and update the policy in response to emerging thinking, evidence and practice about the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

Indicators of Effective Implementation

Typical features of a school where a Child Safety policy is embedded include:

- a Child Safety policy with a statement of commitment relevant to all children in the school, including specific reference to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability
- the fact that the school makes public their commitment to child safety
- the ability of the entire school community to access and understand the school's Child Safety policy; the policy could be translated into different languages for understanding
- all staff, students, volunteers and board members are aware of the policy and clear about their roles and responsibilities
- other school policies, codes and procedures are aligned with the principles and values articulated in the school's Child Safety policy (e.g. reporting obligations)
- that the policy is reviewed and updated on a regular basis ensuring its relevance



- that the policy is known and understood by the entire school community, and positively impacts on school practice and procedures
- that the school monitors adherence to the Child Safety policy.

Resources

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) 2014, *Industrial Relations Page*, accessed 16 May 2016 www.cecv.catholic.edu.au. For information about and resources from the CECV Industrial Relations Unit.

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2013, *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse website*, accessed 16 May 2016 www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au.

For information about the focus of the Royal Commission including its research agenda and reports

State of Victoria, Commission for Children and Young People 2015, *A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Environment Version 2*, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne, accessed 16 May 2016 www.cryp.vic.gov.au/downloads/creating-a-childsafe-organisation-guide.pdf.

State of Victoria, Department of Justice 2016, *Betrayal of Trust implementation*, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne, accessed 16 May 2016 www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/betrayal+of+trust+implementation. For information about the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry response including Criminal Law reform.

State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services 2011, *Human Services*, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne, accessed 16 May 2016 www.dhs.vic.gov.au/home. For information on the Victorian Child Safe Standards for all organisations working with children.

Truth, Justice and Healing Council 2016, *Melbourne Response*, Truth Justice and Healing Council, Canberra, accessed 16 May 2016 www.tjhcouncil.org.au/about-us/about-the-council.aspx. For information about the Catholic Church's response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority (VRQA) 2016, *Child Safe Standards*, State of Victoria (Department of Education and Training), Melbourne, accessed 16 May 2016 www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/Pages/safety.aspx. For compliance information and advice on implementation of Ministerial Order No. 870 by the regulatory authority responsible for the registration of Victorian schools.

References

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) 2016, *Commitment Statement to Child Safety: A safe and nurturing culture for all children and young people in Catholic schools*, CECV, East Melbourne, accessed 16 May 2016 <http://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=8589940208>.

State of Victoria, Department of Education and Training 2016, *Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools Ministerial Order No. 870*, Education & Training Reform Act 2006, Gazette No. S2, accessed 16 May 2016 www.gazette.vic.gov.au/gazette/Gazettes2016/GG2016S002.pdf.

State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) 2015, *An overview of the Victorian child safe standards*, DHHS, Melbourne, accessed 16 May 2016 www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards-overview.doc. †