



St Scholastica's College

A Catholic Day and Boarding School
for girls in Years 7-12

Student Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Background

St Scholastica's College is a Catholic secondary day and boarding school of Good Samaritan Education, committed to the education of girls and young women. St Scholastica's College has a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and neglect and is committed to embedding measures to ensure it is a strong Child Safe Organisation. St Scholastica's College invests substantially in the overall mental and physical wellbeing of its students therefore, we have developed a Student Safety and Wellbeing Policy that provides the key elements of our approach to the College as a child safe organisation and sets out the strategies to ensure compliance with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection in NSW.

Purpose

Our Student Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates the strong commitment of the College to child safety and provides an outline of the policies and practices that we have developed to keep our students safe, including from abuse or other harm. It is an overarching policy that provides the key elements of our approach to the college.

Scope

The College's Student Safety and Wellbeing Policy applies to all adults in the College community, including staff, volunteers, contractors, and visitors. This policy applies in all college environments, both physical and online, and on-site and off-site College grounds (e.g. camps and excursions).

Child Safe Standards

The College's commitment to child safety is based on the Child Safe Standards within the Child Safe Scheme overseen by the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) NSW and aligning with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations published by the Australian Human Rights Commission. We set out the following overarching standards that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect students from abuse and other harm. The 10 Child Safe Standards and the ways in which the College meets these standards are as follows:

Standard 1: Child Safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture. Student Safety and Wellbeing policy is distributed to all staff upon their commencement with the College and whenever updated.

- All staff are required to act in accordance with the College's Child Safe Code of Conduct, Student Safety and Wellbeing Policy, Child Safe Reporting Policy and the Staff Code of Conduct, and associated procedures and processes.
- Student's rights are championed by the College.
- The College's leadership models best practice in ensuring child safety and wellbeing.
- Staff receive appropriate induction, training and professional development on student's rights, student safety and wellbeing.
- Student Safety and Wellbeing policy is available and accessible to students and their families, and to the wider community, including on our website,
- Student safety and wellbeing policy is regularly reviewed and updated in line with legislation.
- The College governors receive safeguarding training, so they understand how to promote a culture of safety and their legal obligations to protect children from harm.

Standard 2: Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

- All students are informed of the student representation opportunities through House Councils, including Homeroom representation and the roles of Prefects and Captains.
- Students are invited to regularly provide feedback and contribute to decision making regarding college events and community activities through surveys and through the House council process.
- Students are aware of and able to vote for representatives.
- Students contribute to the maintenance and development of their representative structure and structure to support ongoing student voice in the college.
- Student representation is supported through the roles of House Mentors who work with student leaders and the student leadership program managed by the Assistant Principals and the Heads of Year.
- Student committees increase opportunities for student engagement in decision making within the college.
- External opportunities are presented to students for engagement in community events and opportunities related to student empowerment and decision making.
- Where appropriate, within the curriculum students are made aware of concepts relevant to empowerment and engagement and participation in decision making structures within their immediate and domestic community and the international community.
- Staff are engaged in supporting student representation processes and student voice within the College.
- The need to support and encourage student involvement in and awareness of decisions affecting them is considered in the development of opportunities and activities at all stages.
- Students are invited to work in partnership with College staff across a range of issues including student matters with the aim of developing competency in skills relevant to student agency.

Standard 3: Families and communities are informed and involved.

- There is open and respectful communication with families and communities about the College's student-related activities and student safety policies.
- All students are provided with the annual College Diary as a source of relevant information regarding college life including child safety and wellbeing.
- Parents, guardians, carers and students receive clear, accessible and age-appropriate information regarding an activity that a student may participate in. This extends to when seeking consent for student's participation in college activities.
- Activities are conducted in culturally safe environments sympathetic to the participants.

Standard 4: Equity is upheld, and diverse needs are taken into account.

- The College ensures the physical, online, and/or social environment for student activities is culturally safe and inclusive.
- Staff development includes training in cultural sensitivity.
- Staff development includes training in pedagogical and procedural adjustments to suit the diverse needs of the student body.
- The College regularly assesses and responds to individual need within the student body and staff, including responses to trauma, physical, learning and social /emotional or psychological need.

Standard 5: People working with children are suitable and supported.

- Robust recruitment processes that emphasise our child safe culture and processes including advertising that identifies our commitment to child safety, appropriate background and referee checks
- Job descriptions and contracts that articulate our child safe culture and practices
- Working with Children Checks are required for all positions
- All staff must agree to abide by the Child Safe Code of Conduct, and to undertake training on the National Principles for Child Safety.
- Third parties (service providers and partner organisations) are also required to sign the Child Safe Code of Conduct and undertake Working with Children Checks where appropriate.

Standard 6: Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child focused.

- Complaints by, on behalf of, or about students are taken seriously and managed promptly.

- The College works in partnership with students to respond to and resolve complaints and concerns that do not meet the threshold for external reporting.
- Child Protection Officers are trained to respond to allegations or disclosures of harm or abuse, including being trauma informed.
- The College has an accessible complaint handling policy and procedure that includes information on how to make a complaint, respond to a complaint, investigate a complaint, and provide support and assistance for those making a complaint.
- Students always have access to College Counsellors and may be invited or encouraged to access counselling following disclosure of student harm or experiencing a distressing situation at the College.

Standard 7: Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training.

- All disclosures and allegations of student abuse or harm are reported to the College's Child Protection Officers and, where necessary, escalated to the Principal as soon as possible.
- Complaints of breaches of the Child Safe Code of Conduct are reported to the Principal and responded to appropriately.
- The College responds to all mandatory requirements and maintains focus on the welfare of students involved.

Standard 8: Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.

- A student safety risk assessment is undertaken for any activity that is extraneous to the regular school day.
- The College grounds and infrastructure are maintained with the reporting of safety and near miss incidents and a review process including the WHS committee.
- Appropriate supervision by College staff is provided through daily rosters throughout the school day including before school and during breaks from class.
- Staff are trained to respond to allegations or disclosures of harm or abuse.
- The use of student images for external publication is undertaken only with direct consent.
- Online activities involving students are conducted using College platforms and processes, supported by College expectations, in a way that promotes a student's right to privacy.
- Online communication between staff and students may be reviewed by other staff member.
- Staff do not store student's personal information on their personal devices.
- Student safety and wellbeing is supported through the pastoral care staffing structures and regular development opportunities for teaching staff.
- The College's behaviour management procedures respond to concerning student conduct, with the objective to return to an effective partnership between the College and student, one which promotes safety and wellbeing within the College.

Standard 9: Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved.

- The College reviews its Student Safety and Wellbeing Policy regularly, as required and at least every two (2) years, to ensure its effectiveness in creating a child safe environment, and its compliance with relevant laws.
- Student Safety and Wellbeing Policy is subject to internal audit for compliance purposes.

Standard 10: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe.

- Student Safety and Wellbeing Policy is publicly accessible on the St Scholastica's College website.
- Other policies and procedures, and further information, are available to guide staff in meeting their obligations under this Policy.

St Scholastica's College Child Safe Principles and Values

- All students have the right to be safe
- The welfare and best interests of the student are paramount
- The views of the student and a student's privacy must be respected
- The safety of student is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture
- Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our college community
- Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility

- Child safety training is mandatory for all staff (day and boarding) and direct contact volunteers
- Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the College community
- Students from a culturally or linguistically diverse background, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students and students who are vulnerable (such as a student in out-of-home care or a student of diverse sexuality) have the right to special care and support
- A student who has any kind of disability has the right to special care and support

Prevention of Harm

This Policy is designed to ensure that all students at the College are protected from the following harm and abuse: **sexual offences** under the Crimes Act 1900 such as:

- contact behaviour' such as:
 - sexual intercourse
 - sexual touching
 - kissing
 - fondling
 - sexual penetration
 - exploiting a child or young person through prostitution.
- 'non-contact behaviour' such as:
 - flirting
 - sexual innuendo
 - inappropriate text messaging
 - inappropriate photography
 - exposure to pornography or nudity.
- Sexual misconduct, such as:
 - descriptions of sexual acts without a legitimate reason to provide the descriptions
 - sexual comments, conversations or communications
 - comments to a child that express a desire to act in a sexual manner towards the child, or another child
 - grooming.
- ill-treatment of a child
- neglect of a child
- an assault against a child
- an offence under 43B (failure to protect) or 316A (failure to report) of the Crimes Act 1900.

St Scholastica's College Policy

St Scholastica's College is committed to the effective implementation of our Student Safety and Wellbeing Policy and ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated. We adopt a risk management approach by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety risks based on a range of factors including the nature of our College's activities, physical and online environments and the characteristics of the student body. Student Safety and Wellbeing Policy relates to all aspects of child safety and protecting students from abuse or other harm, and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to create and maintain a child safe environment and culture at the college. It includes:

- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Information as to what is child abuse and other harm and associated key indicators of abuse or other harm
- Procedures for reporting child safety concerns internally to a Child Protection Officer
- Strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, volunteers, contractors, parents/carers and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters
- Child Safe Recruitment, Induction and Training Policy
- Child Safety Reporting Policy for reporting to external agencies, including mandatory reporting to DCJ, reportable conduct, and reporting to police
- Strategies to support and encourage the participation and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and students with disability
- Child safe trainings

- Information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse or other harm to protect, support and assist students
- Policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations published by the Australian Human Rights Commission)
- System for continuous review and improvement.

As a part of St Scholastica’s College induction process, we require all staff, as well as relevant volunteers and contractors to complete the induction of our Child Safe Policies, Practices and Procedures. All staff, as well as relevant volunteers and contractors receive refresher and ongoing child safe training annually. The College provides all visitors to the college, including casual volunteers and contractors, with information about the Child Safe Code of Conduct and how to report child safety incidents or concerns to the College and to relevant external authorities.

Reporting Student Safety Incidents or Concerns to the College

The College takes appropriate, prompt action in response to all student safety incidents or concerns, including complaints, allegations or disclosures of abuse or other harm, when staff, volunteers, contractors, students, parents/carers or anyone else reports these to the college.

Whenever there are concerns that a child or young person is in **immediate** danger the Police should be called on 000 and/or the Child Protection Helpline (13 21 11) directly and then advise the Child Protection Officer, Principal or next most senior member of staff at the College as soon as possible.

Any person, including all staff, volunteers, contractors, parents/carers and students, can at any time contact the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child or young person (aged under 18), or a class of student or young persons, is at risk of **significant** harm.

Voluntary reports to DCJ can be made by calling the child protection helpline on 132 111 or 1800 212 936 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week). Matters that do not reach the reporting threshold may be referred to AISNSW for additional support if required. Please contact AISNSW on 9299 2845 for advice on how to manage matters that do not reach the reporting threshold (Risk of Significant Harm – ROSH).

All staff, volunteers and contractors must follow our Child Safety Reporting Policy and report all child safety incidents or concerns internally to a Child Protection Officers or the Principal.

Students at the College and boarding students at the Boarding House who have child safety concerns about themselves, or any other student can disclose the child safety incident or concern to any Teacher, Counsellors or Head of Year.

Parents, carers, family members and other community members who have child safety concerns or who suspect that a child or young person associated with the College may be subject to abuse or other harm can contact the College’s Principal, by emailing principal@scholastica.nsw.edu.au.

Responsibilities for Student Safety and Wellbeing at the College

Child safety and child protection is everyone’s responsibility. All staff are required to comply with the Student Safety and Wellbeing Policy, Child Safe Code of Conduct and understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse and other harm, and working with children checks.

The Principal

The Principal is responsible, and will be accountable for all matters of student safety and wellbeing. The Principal is responsible for taking all practical measures to ensure that the College’s Student Safety and Wellbeing Policy is implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child safe culture is maintained within the College. The Principal is the “head” of the College for the purposes of the reportable conduct scheme; they are the “head of a relevant entity (HRE)” under the Children’s Guardian Act 2019 (NSW).

The Executive Leadership Team

Each member of the College Executive Leadership Team is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available in their area of operations to allow the College's Student Safety and Wellbeing Policy to be effectively implemented within the College, and to support the Principal in the practical application of the College's child safety strategies, policies, procedures and work systems.

The College's Child Protection Officers

A number of senior staff members are nominated as the College's Child Protection Officers. Child Protection Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child safety and protection issues. They are a point of contact for raising child safety concerns within the College. They are also responsible for championing child safety within the College and assisting in coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

Our Child Protection Officers are:

	Title	Name	Contact details
Child Protection Officer	Assistant Principal Pastoral Care & Wellbeing	Jen Petschler	jpetschler@scholastica.nsw.edu.au
Child Protection Officer	Assistant Principal Teaching & Learning	Margaret Taborda	mtaborda@scholastica.nsw.edu.au
Child Protection Officer	Head of Boarding	Libby Molony	lmolony@scholastica.nsw.edu.au

Human Resources Management

St Scholastica's College applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, volunteers and contractors, to engage the most suitable and appropriate people to work with student and young people. Our practices include:

- Requiring all staff and relevant volunteers and contractors to maintain a valid working with children check clearance.
- Ensuring that all staff and relevant volunteers and contractors undergo child safe induction, and ongoing education and training.
- Providing all staff and relevant volunteers and contractors with regular supervision and performance monitoring by their Head of Department or a senior member of staff.
- Ensuring that professional development programs for staff include child safe education and training programs.

Risk Management

Risk management strategies will be in place to identify, assess and take steps to minimise risks of abuse to student and young people, which include risks posed by physical and online environments. We identify, assess and manage child safe risks in all College and Boarding House environments, based on a range of factors including the nature of our College and Boarding House activities, their physical and online environments and the characteristics of our students and boarding students, through our risk management policy and procedures.

Breach of the Student Safety and wellbeing Policy

St Scholastica's College enforces Student Safety and Wellbeing Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct. In the event of any non-compliance, we instigate a review that may result in a range of measures including (depending on the severity of the breach):

- Remedial education
- Counselling
- Increased supervision
- The restriction of duties
- Suspension
- In the case of serious breaches, termination of employment, contract, or engagement.