CHILD SAFETY and WELLBEING POLICY

Part One

1. Rationale

All adults have a Biblical mandate to protect children. Schools are organisations established to manage the care and education of children, and as institutions they must protect children through their systems, structures, policies and practices. A Christian school is an organisation that ought to function as a pro-social collaborative community where parents and staff partner together for the care and education of the children.

2. Christian Doctrine is Intrinsic to Education and Operations of this College

The College's foundational doctrines are the Christian Bible, the Apostles Creed, and the traditions of the Christian church. The College's doctrines and Christian traditions are intrinsic to Christian education, including teaching and learning, as well as to all operations of the College. The community-based nature of the learning environment of this school mean it is an intrinsic requirement that all staff including non-teaching staff align with the foundational doctrines listed above.

3. Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Melton Christian College is committed to providing a child safe environment, where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and are able to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives. MCC has zero tolerance for child abuse and is committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The College regards its child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture.

4. Definitions of Child Abuse for this Policy

This policy covers and include all forms of child abuse including: physical child abuse, sexual child abuse, grooming, emotional child abuse, family violence, neglect

5. MCC Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct

5.1. Our College sets these expectations of behaviours for all adults interacting with students within our sites or at school-related events, or in online/remote settings…

1. Always speak and act in a way to proactively protect the safety of students, including the cultural safety of Indigenous students
2. Behave appropriately towards students; physically, emotionally

3. Build a culture of belonging, and both proactively and responsively prevent bullying, teasing, disempowerment, racism towards, or humiliation of students
4. Communicate in an affirming way with students: speak constructively and listen actively, and build an environment where they do the same for each other
5. Demonstrate behaviour aligned with Jesus' teachings and demonstrate the College's Core Values: Christ-centredness, Excellence, Community, Respect, Passion for Teaching and Learning.
6. Enable inclusion and participation of disabled students, and of students from diverse language or cultural backgrounds, and actively establish culturally safe environments in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Indigenous students are respected and valued.
7. Hold study-discussions or assistance-discussions with more than one student at a time, and create safe transparency by using venues with clear line-of-sight, and put in place the online equivalent protections.
8. Never use physical punishment, or even inappropriate tackling or rough playing
9. Only discuss topical or unsettling matters with students in a way appropriate to their age, and only within the context of curricular teaching and learning
10. Protect students from discrimination and prejudices, including your own
11. Refrain from any form of sexual conduct with a student, including making sexually suggestive comments, or disclosing sexually suggestive material, in both online and onsite settings.
12. Refrain from either: closely befriending or favouring, or the opposite, exclusion or alienation of students
13. Refrain from inappropriate physical contact with students, and be aware of the differences (eg, a non-invasive, quick, affirming pat on a shoulder in some contexts may be acceptable, whereas a lingering touch, or stroking, or touching hair is unacceptable)
14. Refrain from personal/non-professional communications with students, and communicate electronically only through official school email or school Learning Management Systems
15. Refrain from photographing students apart from events and images that are specifically for official use in College publications or celebrations, and delete images of students from personal devices once the legitimate, work-related purpose has been fulfilled
16. Report violations of this policy; internally to management, and externally as professionally appropriate, and take immediate action according to professional practice to ensure any child's immediate safety. Reports made under the MCC Whistleblower Policy, may be treated as a report under the MCC Code of Conduct or actioned under the MCC Whistleblower Procedure
17. Supervise students in a way that takes into account their age-related vulnerabilities, including in online settings.
18. Treat all students with equivalent favour
19. Treat confidentiality with professionalism, honour students and their privacy as professionally appropriate
20. Use spaces wisely, eg. use staff toilets, and do your best to avoid using student toilets, put in place equivalent precautions when using online settings.
21. Vigilantly observe and respond to situations concerning child protection matters

5.2. Consequences of Violations

All children have the right to be protected. Adults working in a school have the responsibility to do all that they can to protect children. Therefore, if a staffer violates this MCC Code of Conduct College management will be compelled to take responsive action, or disciplinary action, including possible suspension from duties, or immediate dismissal in the case of a very serious violation.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1. College Council and Board of Directors

Council and Board champion child safety. They promote child safe culture with the broader school community, hold the Principal accountable for effective implementation, keep child safety a monthly agenda item at College Council meetings, undertake annual training, act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and when recruiting governance members, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe.

6.2. Executive Leadership Team

Our executive leadership team (comprising the Principal and Executive Leaders) is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

6.3. Child Protection Officers

To avoid abdication of responsibility by general staff, and to create a culture of child safety MCC opts to distribute and require equal accountability of all staff. Thus, MCC does not formalise this role. Notwithstanding that, the Principal, Heads of School, and Head of Wellbeing are in practice the first point of contact for raising child protection concerns within the College.

6.4. School staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers complete child safety training and always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures. They must stay familiar with this Policy and their legal obligations to report child abuse. They must stay aware of risk indicators, be observant, and ready to raise any concerns. They must ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives, and implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

6.5. Other Responsibilities

 6.5.1. The Principal and their office must ensure currency of training for staff and volunteers. And for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available.

 6.5.2. The wellbeing department act as the Child Safety and Wellbeing Team and a Student Reference Group on child safety. They meet formally and informally (constantly) to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing. The wellbeing department student meetings provide an opportunity for students to provide input into school strategies.

 6.5.3. The Head of Finance and Risk monitors the Child Safety Risk Register.

7. Reviews by Governance:

MCC will ensure that child safety is embedded in school leadership, governance and culture. The governance body of MCC will ensure implementation through termly reviews:

7.1. Term 1 - A review of the policy itself

7.2. Term 2 – A training/refresher for all staff and governance members, in the implementation of this policy

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7.3. Term 3 - Staff interviews to appraise understanding and implementation of this policy

7.4. Term 4 - Onsite inspections of the campuses to ensure child-safety hazards are being eliminated (Inspection checklist appended below)

8. The Eleven Standards

The Victorian Government legislation is expressed as eleven standards as follows…

- Standard 1: Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued
- Standard 2: Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
- Standard 3: Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
- Standard 4: Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing
- Standard 5: Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice
- Standard 6: People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice
- Standard 7: Processes for complaints and concerns are child focussed
- Standard 8: Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training
- Standard 9: Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed
- Standard 10: Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved
- Standard 11: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people

9. MCC Implementation of the Eleven Standards

MCC is committed to implementing the Eleven Standards. The following chart describes some examples of ways MCC will do this. This is not an exhaustive list.

9.1. At MCC each student's ability to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights is encouraged and actively supported.

9.2. MCC staff ensure racism is identified, confronted and not tolerated, and any instances of racism within the school environment are addressed with appropriate consequences.

9.3. Every meeting at all levels of the school has Child Safety as a standing agenda point.

9.4. MCC will retain records of allegations or incidents of child abuse perpetually.

9.5. Students are informed about their rights to safety, to information and to participation.

9.6. MCC engages and openly communicates with families and the school community about its child safe approach.

9.7. We pay particular attention to the needs of students with disability, students from minority cultural and linguistic backgrounds, indigenous students, students who are unable to live at home, international students, and students who are non-mainstream in relation to their gender or sexuality.

9.8. All applicants for jobs as well as volunteers are informed about MCC's child safety practices including the code of conduct. (see Policy 21 Recruitment and Employment Policy)

9.9. MCC has a publicly available Complaints and Grievances Policy (Pol 08) that is accessible, child-focused, culturally safe and easily understood by the school community.

9.10. At least annually, school staff, governance and volunteers complete child safety training.

9.11. Online conduct and safety is dictated by school policies to be consistent with this child safety and the code of conduct of the school. (see POL02 Communications Policy)

9.12. MCC screens facilities and services from third parties to ensure the safety of students. This is because MCC procure a wide range of goods and services, irrespective of price.

9.13. We review and evaluate the child safety policies, procedures and practices after any significant child safety incident, or at least every two years, and improve where applicable

9.14. We ensure complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures and inform continuous improvement.

APPENDICES

Appendix One: Responding to Indications of Child Abuse

Adults of Melton Christian College share the responsibility for ensuring children are safe from harm, and that includes our responsibility to report abuse.

1. Rarely but sometimes an adult might need to report child abuse urgently/immediately without further consultation among Pastoral Care or Senior Management staff. Thus, it is sometimes appropriate to report to DHS or Police first, then in all cases of reporting, it is important that Pastoral Care and/or Senior Management staff be notified immediately afterwards. Senior Management will notify insurers as appropriate.

2. In response to less urgent scenarios of concern, adults who have concerns about children being abused can initially speak to the Head of Pastoral Care to see what actions and/or reporting may already be underway in that case, and then confirm that verbal communication with an email that includes (by CC), the Head of School and the Principal for their information.

3. Adults who suspect child abuse but who are unsure about the appropriate way to report that suspicion should contact The Orange Door (previously Child FIRST), (part of DHS), in the Melton area; see the appendix below, or if they see the need to respond to more urgent or serious cases, they should contact Child PROTECTION (part of DHS) see the appendix below.

4. Adults who have immediate concerns about a child's immediate safety may need to call Police on 000

5. In all cases where there is an allegation of child abuse the Principal is to be informed so that the Principal can fulfil their requirement to make a report to the Commission for Children and Young People when they become aware of a reportable conduct allegation involving any employees, contractors, volunteers (including parents), allied health staff and school council members.

Appendix Two – Reporting to The Orange Door (Child FIRST) or reporting to Child PROTECTION

1. **The Orange Door** A referral to The Orange Door Melton: 1300 138 180] should be considered if the reasons for concern have a low to moderate impact on the child. Also, if the immediate safety of the child is not compromised.

2. **Child PROTECTION or POLICE?** To report concerns that are life threatening ring Victoria Police 000. To report concerns about the immediate safety of a child within their family unit, call the Child Protection Crisis Line 13 12 78 (24 hours, 7 days)

Appendix Three – Governance Audit of Recruitment/Employment Protocols

As part of the cyclical review by the governing bodies (Board of Directors and College Council), these CSS recruitment protocols will be audited.
The suggested inclusions in this audit are:

- Advertising: checking that recruitment adverts include worded reference to the fact that applicants are expected to be compliant with the Child Safety Standards.
- Interviews: checking with interviewers, and (successfully appointed) interviewees to confirm that there was discussion during the interview about the need for a culture embedding the CSS and the implementation of the MCC Child Safe Policy.
- Referees: checking that referees are contacted, and that the questions to referees include questioning to see if the referee has any reason to be concerned about CSS in relation to the applicant.
- Employment History: checking to see that the applicant's employment history looks realistic and that if there are unexplained elements, time-gaps, or inconsistencies, these are cleared up before an employment position is offered to the applicant.
- Confirmation of Identity: following the requirements to ensure that the applicant presenting is the person that they claim to be.

Appendix Four - Child Safe Standards: Governance Audit Interview

Interview Guide Questions
- To what extent do you see an organisational culture of child safety being embedded throughout the departments you work within?
- In what ways do the school's leaders embed a culture of child safety?
- What part do you see the governing bodies (Board of Directors and College Council) playing in the effort to embed an organisational culture of child safety?
- Would you describe yourself as familiar with MCC's child safe policy?
- Can you tell me any of the elements that the policy includes?
- Are your colleagues generally familiar with the child safe policy?
- Do you …
  - o think that the governing bodies (Board of Directors and College Council) would be familiar with the policy?
  - o get a sense that the governing bodies promote the policy?
- Would you say that you are familiar with the VIT Code of Conduct, and the additional points that establish the College's expectations for appropriate behaviour with children?
- Can you tell me any elements of these Codes of Conduct?
- Do you have the opportunity among the MCC community to promote familiarity with the VIT Code of Conduct, and the additional points that establish the College's expectations for appropriate behaviour with children?

- Are there ways that you can take part in screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel?
- Would you know what to do to respond to and to report suspected child abuse?
- Would you say your colleagues always work to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse?
- Would you say that the school leaders encourage staff always to work towards appropriate participation and empowerment of children?
- Would you say that the staff here do always work towards appropriate participation and empowerment of children?

Topic	Questions in Simpler Form
Checking for Child Safety	a) Are the people you work with in the habit of checking for Child Safety?
	b) Do the Principal and Senior Leaders talk about Child Safety a lot, and check up on it a lot?
	c) Should the Board of Directors and College Council also talk about Child Safety and check up on it too?
Knowing the Policy	a) Have you read our 'Child Safety and Wellbeing policy'? How long ago?
	b) Can you tell me a couple of things from that policy that you have to do?
	c) Do the people you work with know about that policy and what it says to do?
	d) i. Do you see evidence that the Board of Directors and College Council are aware of this policy? (e.g. in policies, through the principal, in council statements etc.) ii. Do you think the Board of Directors and College Council encourage staff to do what that policy says to do?
Knowing the Codes of Conduct	a) Do you know there is a VIT Code of Conduct? And do you know there is an MCC Code of Conduct?
	b) Can you tell me anything that is in the VIT Code of Conduct or our MCC Code of Conduct?
	c) Have you ever talked to other staff or parents about the VIT Code of Conduct or the MCC Code of Conduct?
Noticing Indicators	a) Do you always keep an eye out for any signs that a child might be being abused, including by new or existing staff members?
	b) Throughout the school, do all staff watch out for child abuse, or risks that child abuse could happen here?
Speaking Up	a) Would you know what to do if you did suspect child abuse was happening?
	b) Do the principal and other senior leaders constantly remind everyone to encourage children to speak up?
	c) Do all staff always teach the children that they can and should speak up?

Appendix Five – Brookfield Campus and Toolern Vale Campus
Child Safe Standards checklist for inspection

Campus:	Areas Inspected
Date:	Inspected by:
Additional info about inspection:	

Observations supporting CS	Suitability	…………………………Comments……………………	Rating
Cleaners cupboards access/egress			
Cleaning chemicals storage areas			
Corners of buildings			
Corridors and their usage			
Cubbies			
Cupboard access			
Doors and windows			
Emergency assembly areas			
Equipment storage areas			
External - Out of bounds areas			
External - Pathways			
External - plantations			
External - Plants, shrubs and trees			
Food storage areas			
Furniture - classroom			
Furniture - exterior			
Hidden corners external			
Hidden corners internal			
Kitchens, kitchenettes			
Lighting in corridors			
Lighting in rooms and corridors			
Lighting in storerooms			

Lighting to cupboards			
Location of doors, windows			
Lockable cupboards			
Open visibility generally			
Outdoor - boundaries and fences			
Outdoor - Car-park areas			
Outdoor - Driveways			
Outdoor - playground equipment			
Outdoor - Retaining walls			
Outdoor – steps and slopes			
Play areas visibility			
Shedding, containers, etc			
Stairs/stairwells and access			
Storage areas access/egress			
Storage rooms			
Visibility around exit doors			
Visitor access			
Void areas			
Walkways			
Walls			
Waste processing areas			
Water storage tanks areas			

Risk rating – Very High, High, Medium, Low
(VH, H, & M, are to be responded to with immediate interim safety measures)

Additional information or observations …

Appendix Six – Child Safety Code of Conduct – Child Friendly Version
Redrafted to be Understandable by Children

1. **God tells Adults to Care for Children**

In the Bible, God shows us that adults have to protect children. All adults in all schools must care for children. That means in our school, all adults must care for every one of our children.

2. Our school is a Christian school, so we should do what Jesus tells us to do in the bible

At our school we do what Jesus taught us to do. He taught that adults must care for children.

At our school we also copy what Jesus did. Jesus cared for children so our school must be a place where children are cared for.

3. What All Adults Must Do

The Bible tells adults to care for children. As well as that, everywhere in Australia the rules are that adults must never do bad things to children. The police have the special job of making sure that no adult harms a child.

Teachers also have a special job. They have to watch and listen to make sure that their children are safe.

All children deserve to be safe. Even though adults are stronger and know more things than children, adults are not allowed to trick children or make children feel uncomfortable and then pretend they didn't do it, or lie about it to other adults. Adults are not allowed to make a child feel uncomfortable and tell the child to keep it a secret. Secrets like that are not allowed, the child has to tell one of their safe people.

4. The Rules for Adults

Parents, teachers, helpers, gardeners, tradies, all adults must keep these rules

1. All adults must look after children. This includes Indigenous-Aussie kids, Indian-Aussie kids, local-Aussie kids, African-Aussie kids, Asian-Aussie kids, and all the other cultures.
2. Adults must never scare kids or touch kids in creepy ways.
3. Every child is precious, so all adults have to protect kids from cruelty.
4. Adults have to speak helpfully to kids and listen carefully to kids.
5. Jesus cared about children, so our adults have to care about children too.
6. Children are all different, and they are all precious, so all children need to be safe even if they look different, sound different, move differently from other children.
7. In classrooms and other spaces adults need to make sure that children feel safe.
8. Adults must never hit children or touch children in unkind or creepy ways.
9. Adults must talk with children in ways that are not scary or creepy for the children.
10. Adults must protect all children just as much as each other whether they like them or not.
11. 11a. An adult must not have secret conversations with children about their private parts, and an adult is not allowed to touch children's private parts.
    11b. An adult must never ask a child to touch them, especially their private parts.
12. Every adult must care for every child just as much as every other child; no favourites.
13. An adult can give children a pat on the head or a pat on the shoulder in a friendly way, but no creepy touching.
14. Adults must say kind things to children, no scary or creepy conversations.
15. A teacher can take a photo of school children for awards and other fun things, but no scary settings and no creepy photos allowed.
16. If an adult breaks one of these rules, the child has to tell another teacher, or their parent, or the principal, or a different adult, and they have to keep telling other adults until the problem is stopped.

17. Adults have to care for children in ways that shows younger children need more care and older children are a bit better at looking after themselves, but still need to be looked after.
18. Adults must take it seriously if a child tells them these rules have been broken by another adult.
19. Adults should only use the adult toilets and children should only go in the children's toilets.
20. Adults must watch children and listen to them to keep them safe.

Appendix 7 - Child Safety Code of Conduct
Redrafted to be Understood by Secondary Students

1. What a Policy is

A policy is a written explanation of how people are to behave and what they are to do in relation to a particular topic. Policies in schools are like rules, but they are rules that everyone including the principal and all staff must keep. Policies are like internal laws for the school.
This policy is about protecting children from abuse.

2. Why we have this Policy

The Bible teaches that adults must protect children. Schools are all about nurturing children, so it is particularly important that schools work to keep children safe from abuse.
Because we are a Christian school and Jesus taught that adults must care for children, this topic is particularly important for our school.

3. Vulnerability of Young People

Because they are young, students can be vulnerable. Adults could deceive them, lie to them, make them do things that they are not comfortable doing and that they know are not right.
There is a clear difference of authority between staff and students in a school. Most of the time this is good because staff use their authority to create a safe environment for young people. Staff have the job of preventing bullying and harassment and other destructive behaviours, so it is proper that staff have the authority to do this.
The authority difference only goes wrong when it is abused. It is dreadful but true that there are adults who for whatever reason, may abuse children. Child abuse can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, grooming, emotional abuse, family violence, and/or neglect.

4. Telling a Different Adult

If a student is uncomfortable about how an adult is speaking or acting, they must tell a different adult. If it doesn't get stopped, they must keep telling other different adults until it does get stopped and they are made safe. A student could tell a teacher, a coordinator, the principal, or any other adult.

5. Christian Guidelines are in Everything at MCC

MCC uses to the Bible to guide us as to what is right and wrong. We also rely on an ancient statement called the Apostles Creed, and also on the traditions of the Christian church. Our school says that all MCC staff have to be guided by the Bible and those other two sources.

6. MCC Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct

Because all adults in our school have a duty to protect children, we have a list of do's and don'ts for adults to follow. It is called the MCC Child Safety Code of Conduct. It is written below.

All children have the right to be protected, and all adults working in any school have the responsibility to do all that they can to protect children.

Victorian and Australian laws protect children. In fact, if an adult abuses a child, school principals and teachers have a legal duty to report it and prevent it. If they don't they themselves will be breaking a law and could go to gaol.

7. MCC Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct

Our College sets these expectations of behaviours for all adults interacting with students within our campuses or at school-related events…

1. Adults must always speak and act in a way to proactively protect the safety of students, including the cultural safety of Indigenous students
2. Adults must behave appropriately towards students; physically, emotionally
3. Adults must build a culture of belonging, and both proactively and responsively prevent bullying, teasing, disempowerment, racism towards, or humiliation of students
4. Adults must communicate in an affirming way with students: speak constructively and listen actively, and build an environment where they do the same for each other
5. Adults must demonstrate behaviour aligned with Jesus' teachings and demonstrate the College's Core Values: Christ-centredness, Excellence, Community, Respect, Passion for Teaching and Learning.
6. Adults must enable inclusion and participation of disabled students, and of students from diverse language or cultural backgrounds, and actively establish culturally safe environments inwhich the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Indigenous students are respected and valued.
7. Adults should hold study-discussions or assistance-discussions with more than one student at a time, and create safe transparency by using venues with clear line-of-sight
8. Adults must never use physical punishment, or even inappropriate tackling or rough playing
9. Adults should only discuss topical or unsettling matters with students in a way appropriate to their age, and only within the context of curricular teaching and learning
10. Adults must protect students from discrimination and prejudices, including any they themselves may have
11. Adults must refrain from any form of sexual conduct with a student, including making sexually suggestive comments, or disclosing sexually suggestive material
12. Adults must refrain from either: closely befriending or favouring, or the opposite, exclusion or alienation of students
13. Adults must refrain from inappropriate physical contact with students, and be aware of the differences (eg, a non-invasive, quick, affirming pat on a shoulder in some contexts may be acceptable, whereas a lingering touch, or stroking, or touching hair is unacceptable)
14. Adults must refrain from personal/non-professional communications with students, and communicate electronically only through official school email or school Learning Management Systems

15. Adults must refrain from photographing students apart from events and images that are specifically for official use in College publications or celebrations, and delete images of students from personal devices once the legitimate, work-related purpose has been fulfilled

16. 16a. Everyone must report violations of this policy; internally to the principal, the head of secondary or a coordinator, and

    16b. Once a child has reported the violation of this policy, then the staffer must report it externally as professionally appropriate and take immediate action according to professional practice to ensure any child's immediate safety.

17. Adults must supervise students in a way that takes into account their age-related vulnerabilities

18. Adults must treat all students with equivalent favour

19. Adults must treat confidentiality with professionalism, honour students and their privacy as professionally appropriate

20. Adults must use spaces wisely, eg. Staff should only use staff toilets, and students should only use student toilets

21. Adults must vigilantly observe and respond to situations concerning child protection matters