



Child Safety and Safeguarding Program

Child Safeguarding Reporting and Responding Obligations Policy and Procedures

Background

St Patrick's College is a Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition. The charism of Blessed Edmund Rice expressed through the touchstones of Liberating Education, Gospel Spirituality, Inclusive Community, Justice and Solidarity, underpins our continued commitment to a safe and inclusive environment for all.

St Patrick's College is a Catholic day and boarding college for boys in the Edmund Rice tradition, established in 1893. St Patrick's College is committed to providing a caring, supportive, and safe environment where every student has a place, a voice and their story is known.

The EREA VSL Board, the College's governing authority, has approved the College's Child Safeguarding Reporting and Responding Obligations Policy and Procedures as set out in the Policy Administration section, below.

St Patrick's College's Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

All children and young people have a right to feel safe and be safe.

St Patrick's College is committed to embedding a culture where the safety, wellbeing, and participation of all children and young people under our care is paramount. Particular attention is given to the needs of vulnerable children and young people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander children and young people, children and young people with disability and mental health issues, children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, children and young people who are unable to live at home, and those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex. We are committed to at all times acting in the best interests of children and young people.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and all allegations and safety concerns are treated very seriously and consistent with our robust safeguarding policies and procedures. St Patrick's College is committed to nurturing the wellbeing of all children and young people, respecting their dignity, ensuring their safety and protecting them from abuse and other harm. St Patrick's College and its School-Based Staff, Contractors and Volunteers have legal and moral obligations to respond swiftly, including contacting authorities where relevant when we are concerned about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

St Patrick's College is committed to providing a safe and child-friendly environment, where children and young people are safe and feel safe and can actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.

At St Patrick's College we have zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in our students' best interests and keeping them safe from harm.

St Patrick's College regards its child safeguarding, wellbeing, and protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child safety, wellbeing and protection laws and regulations and maintain a child-safe culture.

Purpose

This policy demonstrates the strong commitment of the College to the care, safety, and wellbeing of all children within our college community. It provides an outline of the policies, procedures and strategies developed to keep students safe from harm, including all forms of abuse in the College environment, on campus, online and in other locations provided by the College.

This policy is in accord with the EREA Charter and Touchstones. This policy takes into account relevant legislative requirements within the state of Victoria, including the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in Ministerial Order No. 1359. This policy acknowledges the obligations in respect of the EREA Child Safeguarding Standards.

This policy applies to all College staff, including employees, clergy, Board members, volunteers, and contractors.

Our Child Safeguarding Reporting and Responding Obligations Policy and Procedures demonstrates the strong commitment of the College to child safety, and provide an outline of the policies and practices that we have developed to keep our students safe, including from abuse or other harm.

This overarching Policy and its Procedures provide the key elements on which the College's full set of policies and procedures for recognising, responding to and reporting child safety incidents or concerns (included in the College's Child Safety and Safeguarding Program) [1] are based.

This Policy and its Procedures assist St Patrick's College and its School-Based Staff, Volunteers, Contractors, other service providers and religious leaders including clergy to:

- identify indicators of a child or young person being (or at risk of being) "abused," "otherwise harmed", "in need of protection", or subjected to "Reportable Conduct"
- understand how to tell the College about students in these situations, and take action to protect and support the student and others who may be impacted
- comply with the College's organisational duty of care and their own duty to protect students (including obligations under the Failure to Protect offence)
- comply with their obligations (under the law and under College policy) to report child safety incidents or concerns to relevant external authorities, including:
 - mandatory reporting of physical and sexual abuse to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH Child Protection)
 - mandatory reporting of sexual offences against children (including grooming) to Police
- comply with their obligations under the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme
- comply with other laws, regulations, and relevant standards relating to recognising, reporting and responding to child safety incidents or concerns, including in particular Ministerial Order 1359.

Principles

EREA Victorian Schools Ltd. (EREA VSL) and St Patrick's College are committed to ensuring the safety, wellbeing, and participation of all students.

The EREA VSL Board and St Patrick's College have a moral, legal and mission-driven responsibility to create nurturing school environments where children and young people are respected and their voices

heard, and where they are safe and feel safe.

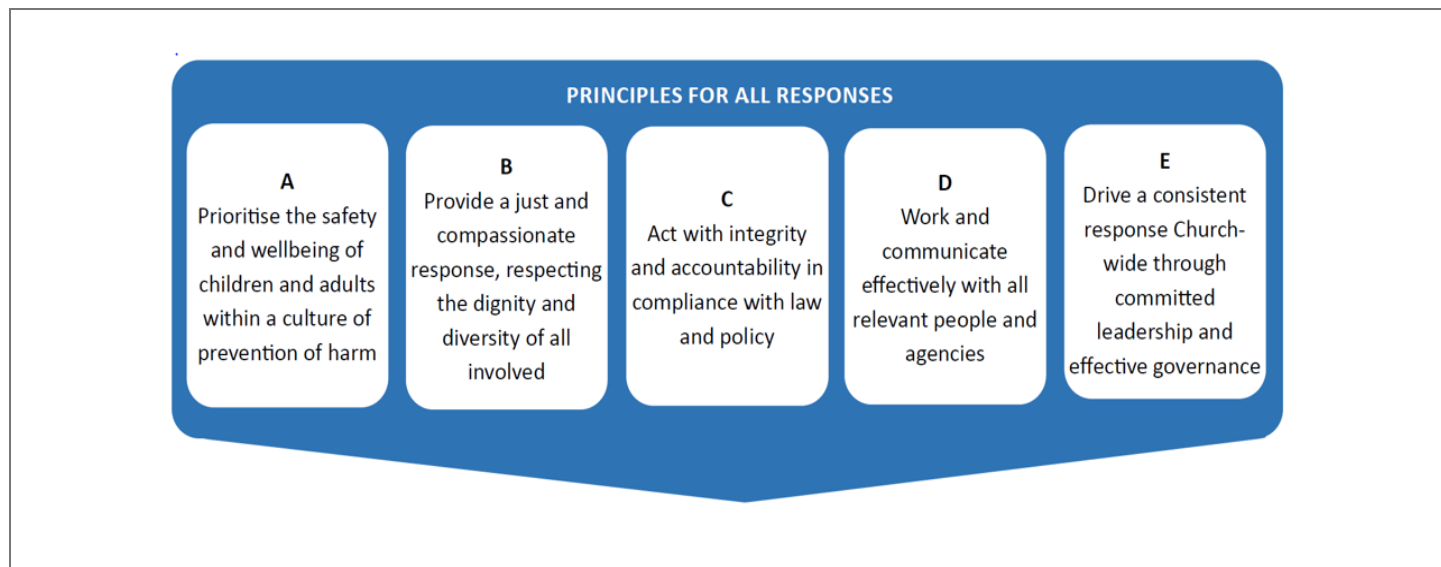
Ministerial Order 1359 and the EREA VSL Safeguarding Framework set out the principles that guide EREA VSL and St Patrick's College in the development and regular review of the Child Safeguarding Reporting and Responding Obligations Policy and Procedures.

The EREA VSL Board and every person involved in St Patrick's College have a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they have individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people are at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

Child safety, wellbeing and protection are based on the belief that each person is made in the image and likeness of God, and that the inherent dignity of all should be recognised and fostered.

All of the College's policies and procedures for recognising, reporting and responding to child safety incidents or concerns are designed and implemented to be inclusive of the diverse characteristics of the College community.

These Principles are consistent with those articulated by the Australian Catholic Bishops in their document *The National Response Protocols*:



Scope

This Policy and its Procedures apply to child safety incidents involving, and complaints and concerns made by or in relation to (including but not limited to incidents, complaints and concerns relating to child abuse), a child or student, school staff, school boarding premises staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors, or other persons while connected to a school environment or school boarding premises environment.

This Policy and its Procedures apply in all College and Boarding School environments (together referred to as College environments), within the meaning of Ministerial Order 1359, including physical, virtual and online environments used during or outside school hours, on-site and off-site College grounds (e.g. extra-curricular activities such as sports and other programs, camps and excursions, interstate and overseas travel), and environments provided by External Education Providers and other Contractors.

Fulfilling the roles and responsibilities contained in this Policy and its Procedures does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse or other harm.

Definitions

Definitions of particular terms used in the Child Safeguarding Reporting and Responding Obligations Policy and Procedure can be found in the [Child Safety and Safeguarding Policy: Master Definitions List](#).

Of particular importance to this Policy and its Procedures are the following key definitions:

“Child Safety Incident or Concern”

This Policy and its Procedures (and the College’s Child Safety and Safeguarding Program) use the phrase **“child safety incident or concern”** rather than the more limited concept of “child abuse”.

Child safety incidents or concerns can take many forms. These include not only “child abuse” of a child or young person by their parents/carers, but also conduct by other adults or other children that can cause harm to a student. The perpetrator may be a parent, carer, School-Based Staff member, Volunteer, Contractor, another adult or even another child or young person.

At the College, we define “child safety incidents or concerns” as:

- incidents of or concerns about **child abuse** as defined in the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) (CWS Act)
- incidents of or concerns about **other harm**, defined below
- incidents of or concerns about **Reportable Conduct** as defined in the CWS Act
- incidents of or concerns about a breach of the Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct (Vic) by School-Based Staff, Volunteers and Contractors, no matter how minor the breach
- incidents of or concerns about **child abuse** or **other harm** of a student by another student or by another person while at the College or in a College environment.

The nature of child abuse and other harm is complex. The abuse/harm may occur over time and potential indicators are often difficult to detect.

For definitions of all of the different types of child abuse and other harm, a comprehensive list of the indicators of these types of harm, and advice on identifying perpetrators of child sexual abuse, refer to the protocol PROTECT Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools.

“Other Harm”

Because the definition of “child abuse” in the CWS Act is quite limited, reference to other kinds of harm to children and young people, that must be reported internally to the College and that must be responded to in accordance with this Policy and its Procedures, is required.

“Other harm” includes:

- children and young people who may be “in need of protection”, as set out in the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) (CYF Act)
- children and young people who may be “in need of therapeutic treatment for sexually abusive behaviours,” as set out in the CYF Act
- other situations in which there are significant concerns for the wellbeing of a child or young person such that a report should be made to DFFH Child Protection under the CYF Act or to Child FIRST/the Orange Door
- students who may be subjected to sexual orientation or gender identity change or suppression practices, which are prohibited by the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act 2021 (Vic).

Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities relevant to child safeguarding at the College in general are set out in St Patrick's College's **Child Safeguarding Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures**, available on our public website.

The following roles have additional responsibilities under this Policy and its Procedures:

- all School-Based Staff and Volunteers are responsible for understanding and complying with their general duty of care towards all students and for responding appropriately to a student who raises or is affected by a child safety incident or concern
- all School-Based Staff and Volunteers are responsible for understanding their internal and external reporting requirements and for complying with this Policy and its Procedures
- St Patrick's College's Child Safeguarding Officers, listed below, and the Principal are responsible for:
 - ensuring that the College responds appropriately to a student who raises or is affected by a child safety incident or concern
 - promptly and thoroughly receiving internal reports
 - providing assistance and advice to School-Based Staff and Volunteers about their obligations under this Policy and its Procedures and the Child Safeguarding Complaints Management Policy and Procedures
 - ensuring that all child safety incidents or concerns, including those that occur at or involve the College or that involve School-Based Staff or Volunteers, are taken seriously, escalated, reported and responded to
 - managing the College's response
 - monitoring the College's compliance with this Policy and its Procedures
- the Principal is responsible for monitoring the overall compliance of the College's services with this Policy and its Procedures at the school level
- where a particular child safety incident or concern involves the Principal and they therefore cannot perform the above roles, the EREA VSL Director of Safeguarding undertakes these responsibilities
- The EREA VSL Board ensures that the College captures, analyses and, where appropriate, acts on child safety incidents and concerns that occur at or involve the College, as well as any child safeguarding-related feedback, comments or complaints from College community members and relevant stakeholders, as set out in the EREA VSL Safeguarding Framework
- The EREA VSL Board is the College's and the Boarding School's "governing authority" for the purposes of Ministerial Order 1359, and is responsible for approving this Policy and its Procedures.

Our Child Safeguarding Officers are:

Name	Position	Contact No.	Email Address
Steven O'Connor	Principal	03 5322 4412 0427 431 617	soconnor@stpats.vic.edu.au
Jamie Bobrowski	Director Human Resources, Risk & Compliance	03 5322 4477 0422004244	jbobrowski@stpats.vic.edu.au
Ebony Corden	Human Resources Officer	03 5322 4304 0487420406	ecorden@stpats.vic.edu.au
Kevin Robillard	Assistant Principal-Pastoral Care & Wellbeing	03 5322 4350 0450 781 638	krobillard@stpats.vic.edu.au
Simon Peake	Assistant Principal-Staff & Culture	03 5322 4428 0400 187 511	speake@stpats.vic.edu.au
Carol Roberts	Acting Deputy Principal-Learning Innovation	03 5322 4432 0419 362 458	caroberts@stpats.vic.edu.au
Geoff Brodie	Assistant Principal-Mission & Identity	03 5322 4326 0437 753 332	gbrodie@stpats.vic.edu.au

Additional responsibilities relevant to specific responding and reporting obligations are set out in the relevant sections of this Policy and its Procedures.

St Patrick's College's Policy

The Four Critical Actions/Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending

It is The EREA VSL Board's policy that all EREA VSL schools **must** display the **PROTECT Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse** diagram (Four Critical Actions) (Appendix 1) and the **PROTECT Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending** (Student Sexual Offending Four Critical Actions) (Appendix 2) in staffrooms and other strategic areas of the College to ensure that all School-Based Staff and Volunteers are aware of the actions to take as soon as they witness a child safety incident or develop a child safety concern, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable suspicion or belief that a child has been, or is at risk of being, abused or harmed. The Child Safeguarding Complaints Management Policy and Procedures should also be considered in responding to complaints with child safety implications.

Duty of Care

All School-Based Staff and Volunteers must understand their role to keep children and young people safe. In particular, School-Based Staff and Volunteers have an obligation to avoid acts or omissions (failures) that could be reasonably foreseen to injure or harm students.

As part of this duty of care, **all School-Based Staff and Volunteers** must report situations that may result in reasonably foreseeable risks of any kind of harm to students (including risks of child abuse and other harm) internally to the Principal or a Child Safeguarding Officer and externally to relevant authorities.

Failure to Protect/Duty to Protect

In Victoria, it is a crime if a person who occupies a position within or in relation to a school:

- knows that there is a substantial risk that:
 - a child (aged under 16) who is under the care, supervision or authority of the College will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with the College;
 - and

- has, by reason of their position, the power or responsibility to reduce or remove that risk; and
- negligently fails to reduce or remove that risk.

This criminal offence is known as “Failure to Protect” and, in the College context, it covers failures to protect a student aged under 16 from sexual abuse by School-Based Staff and Volunteers who are adults (students aged 18 or over and parents/carers are not “adults associated with the College” for the purposes of the Failure to Protect Offence).

St Patrick's College also has a common law duty to protect **all** students from reasonably foreseeable risks of harm, including risks of **all** types of child abuse or other harm that may arise from **all** people associated with the College (including Representatives, students aged 18 or over, parents/carers and other family members of students).

To help School-Based Staff and Volunteers meet both their Failure to Protect and Duty to Protect obligations, St Patrick's College requires that:

a) if a **School-Based Staff member or Volunteer** forms a view/knows that:

- any adult associated with the College (including School-Based Staff, Volunteers, Contractors, students aged 18 or over, parents/carers and other family members of students) poses:
 - a substantial risk of sexually abusing a student; or
 - a reasonably foreseeable risk of any form of child abuse or other harm to a student

b) they **must**:

- take any actions to reduce or remove that risk that are within their power or responsibilities to take
- report the matter to the Principal (or, if the adult who poses the risk is the Principal, to the EREA VSL Chief Executive Officer or the Director of Human Resources, Risk and Compliance Mr. Jamie Bobrowski through safeguardingvic@erea.edu.au)
- follow their obligations to make appropriate external reports as listed below.

Actions that could be taken to protect students include, but are not limited to:

- immediately removing the person from contact with students
- ensuring that the person is not left alone with a student
- if the person is a parent, not allowing them to act as a parent volunteer or to attend College events

- if the person is an adult other than a student or a School-Based Staff member, requesting the Principal to issue a School Community Safety Order in appropriate cases.

School-Based Staff and Volunteers' Response to Child Safety Incidents or Concerns

School-Based Staff and Volunteers must follow the Four Critical Actions and Student Sexual Offending Four Critical Actions when responding to child safety incidents or concerns.

If a complaint made to a School-Based Staff member or Volunteer refers to a child safety incident or concern that:

- occurred at the College; or
- occurred in a College environment; or
- involved another School-Based Staff member or Volunteer

the individual to whom the complaint is made must also respond to the complaint following the Child Safeguarding Complaints Management Policy and Procedures.

As required by the Four Critical Actions and the Student Sexual Offending Four Critical Actions, **all School-Based Staff and Volunteers must:**

- meet their legal obligations to protect students from harm, and take action in response to any emergency situations involving child safety incidents or concerns, (including those that occur at the College or in a College environment)
- report any and all child safety incidents or concerns involving our students to a Child Safeguarding Officer or the Principal (including incidents or concerns that involve students aged 18 or over and those raised in child safeguarding-related complaints)
- make any and all reports to external authorities that are required by law or by the Four Critical Actions/Student Sexual Offending Four Critical Actions or College policy (these are explained further in the **Procedures** section, below)
- provide ongoing support to affected students and support colleagues who disclose harm.

Reporting internally to or consulting with a Child Safeguarding Officer or the Principal, does not change any obligation under legislation to report to an external authority.

All School-Based Staff and Volunteers must make reports to the relevant external authority if they form the required belief about the matter, even if the person they reported to internally at the College does not share that belief.

The College's Response to Internal Reports

The College's Principal and Child Safeguarding Officers will take appropriate, prompt action in response to all child safety incidents or concerns, including all complaints, allegations or disclosures of abuse or other harm, when these are reported to the College, whether by School-Based Staff, Volunteers, students, parents/carers or anyone else.

The safety and wellbeing of the student/s involved in the matter will be the paramount consideration when responding to child safety incidents and concerns. The College follows the National Office of Child Safety's [Complaint Handling Guide: Upholding the rights of children and young people](#) and the Commission for Children and Young People's [Including Children and Young People in Reportable Conduct Investigations resources](#) when investigating and responding to child safety incidents and concerns.

If a complaint that is made or reported to the College is about, or includes information about, a child safety incident or concern that occurred at the College or in a College environment or that involved a School-Based Staff member or Volunteer, the College will manage the complaint following our [Child Safeguarding Complaints Management Policy and Procedures](#).

The Principal and Child Safeguarding Officers will ensure that St Patrick's College's response to all child safety incidents or concerns, including complaints, allegations or disclosures of abuse or other harm, will include the College:

- reporting all matters that meet the required relevant thresholds externally to DFFH Child Protection, the Police, the CCYP, and/or the VIT, depending on the issues raised
- reporting internally to EREA VSL by the Principal:
 - all matters that require reporting to an external agency
 - harmful sexual behaviour by students that does not otherwise require external reporting
 - other matters as directed by EREA VSL
- fully cooperating with any resulting investigation by EREA VSL and/or an external agency
- protecting any student connected to the child safety incident or concern until it is resolved and providing ongoing support to those affected
- taking particular measures in response to child safety incidents or concerns about an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student, a student from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, a student with disability, and other vulnerable students (such as students who are unable to live at home or students who identify as lesbian gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex)

- sharing information with, or requesting information from, external people or agencies as permitted or required under the Child Information Sharing Scheme and/or the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme
- securing and retaining records of the child safety incident or concern and the College's response to it
- taking broader actions to improve child safety at the College (including systemic reviews and resulting improvements).

Procedures

There are a number of legal obligations that St Patrick's College, School-Based Staff and Volunteers must follow when responding to child safety incidents or concerns. In addition to these legal obligations, the College also requires School-Based Staff and Volunteers to respond to and to report certain child safety incidents and concerns to external authorities in situations where this is not required by law.

These legal and policy-based obligations, and their procedures, align with the Four Critical Actions and the Student Sexual Offending Four Critical Actions and are summarised below.

At St Patrick's College, the process for reporting a complaint or concern will not:

- prohibit or discourage School-Based Staff, School Boarding Premises Staff or Volunteers from reporting a complaint or concern relating to child abuse to a person external to the College or Boarding School
- state or imply that it is the victim's responsibility to inform the Police or other authorities of an allegation relating to child abuse
- require School-Based Staff, School Boarding Premises Staff or Volunteers to make a judgment about the truth of a complaint or concern relating to child abuse
- prohibit School-Based Staff, school boarding premises staff or Volunteers from making records in relation to a complaint or concern relating to child abuse.

Becoming aware of a child safety incident or concern

School-Based Staff and Volunteers may become aware of a child safety incident or concern through:

- witnessing a child safety incident
- observing:

- key indicators of child abuse or other harm in a child or young person
- conduct towards a child or young person by an adult that breaches the [Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct \(Vic\)](#). (if the adult is associated with the College) or is otherwise indicative of child abuse or other harm
- being told about a child safety incident by the child or young person themselves (a disclosure), directly or indirectly through assignments, artwork or other means
- being told about a child safety incident or concern by a third party, such as a friend, parent/carer, other family member or other person (including as part of complaint)
- being told, by a former student, about a historical child safety incident that occurred at or involved the College or its Staff, Volunteers or Contractors, (including as part of a complaint).

School-Based Staff and Volunteers must act, by following the Four Critical Actions as soon as they witness an incident, receive a disclosure or have formed a 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' that a child has been or is being abused or is at risk of being abused.

School-Based Staff and Volunteers are not required to make a judgement about the truth of a complaint or concern.

For guidance on how to manage each of these situations, refer to the protocol [PROTECT Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#) and the College's Managing Your Initial Response to a Child Safety Incident or Concern Policies and Procedures.

1. Critical Action One: Respond to Emergencies

1.1 Responding to an Emergency

If a student has just been or is at immediate risk of being harmed, **all School-Based Staff and Volunteers must** ensure their safety by:

- separating alleged victims and others involved
- administering first aid
- calling 000 for urgent medical assistance or Police assistance to address immediate health and safety concerns
- briefing the Senior Child Safeguarding Officer to be the future liaison with the Police on the matter.

When a child safety incident occurs at St Patrick's College or in a College environment, **all School-Based Staff and Volunteers must** preserve evidence of the incident, if it is safe to do so, by:

- **Environment:** do not clean up the area, and preserve the sites where the alleged incident occurred.
- **Clothing:** take steps to ensure that the person who has allegedly committed the abuse and the child who has allegedly been abused remain in their clothing. If this is not possible, ensure the clothes are not washed, handled as little as possible and stored in a sealed bag.
- **Other physical items:** ensure that items such as weapons, bedding and condoms are untouched.
- **Potential witnesses:** reasonable precautions must be taken to prevent discussion of the incident between those involved in or witnesses of the alleged incident.

2. Critical Action Two: Report (Internally and to Authorities)

2.1 Internal Reporting of Child Safety Incident or Concerns

St Patrick's College requires that **all School-Based Staff and Volunteers must** report any and all child safety incidents or concerns involving our students (including those involving students aged 18 or over) to a Child Safeguarding Officer or the Principal.

Contact details for our Child Safeguarding Officers are set out in the **Responsibilities** section, above.

In the event that Child Safeguarding Officers and the Principal are not available, School-Based Staff and Volunteers must report the matter to the EREA VSL Director of Safeguarding.

College Advisory Council members must make any internal reports directly to the Principal. The Principal must advise the Advisory Council member, in writing, of the actions that the College has taken or will take in response to their report within three business days after receiving the report.

If a matter involves the Principal, the internal report must instead be made to the EREA VSL Chief Executive Officer or the EREA VSL Director of Safeguarding, through safeguardingvic@erea.edu.au.

The EREA VSL [Incident Notification and Management Framework](#) sets out how the College reports, to EREA VSL, child safety incidents or concerns that occur at the College or involve its School-Based Staff members or Volunteers.

Upon receipt of a report from a School-Based Staff member or Volunteer, and within 24 hours, the Child Safeguarding Officer or Principal must complete the EREA VSL Child Protection Incident

Notification Form, as per the EREA VSL Incident Notification and Management Framework.

2.2 Mandatory Reporting to DFFH Child Protection

Although everyone has a moral and social responsibility to report concerns about child abuse or other harm, some professionals are legally required to make a report to DFFH Child Protection in certain circumstances.

DFFH Child Protection has a responsibility to provide child protection services for all children and young people under the age of 17 years, or where a protection order is in place, for children under the age of 18.

The main functions of DFFH Child Protection are to:

- receive reports from people who believe that a child is in need of protection or have significant concerns about the wellbeing of a child
- provide consultation and advice to people making reports
- investigate matters where it is believed that a child is at risk of significant harm
- refer children and families to services that assist in providing for the ongoing safety and wellbeing of children.

Who are Mandatory Reporters at the College?

At St Patrick's College, the following people are Mandatory Reporters:

- teachers
- the Principal
- medical practitioners
- nurses
- school counsellors
- registered psychologists
- early childhood workers
- persons in religious ministry.

School-Based Staff and Volunteers in the above categories are Mandatory Reporters regardless of whether they are engaged by the College as a School-Based Staff member, Volunteer or Contractor.

When Must a Mandatory Report be Made?

A Mandatory Report must be made if – during the course of their professional work or carrying out duties of their office, position or employment – a Mandatory Reporter:

- forms a belief on reasonable grounds,
- that a child who is aged under 17 (or who is aged 17 but is under a child protection order) is “in need of protection” because:
 - the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse; and
 - the child’s parents have not protected or are unlikely (including if they are unable) to protect the child from the harm.

Mandatory Reporters must make their report to DFFH Child Protection “as soon as practicable” after forming their belief on reasonable grounds.

What is a Belief on Reasonable Grounds?

The concept of a “belief on reasonable grounds” requires you to consider whether another person, when faced with similar information, would also draw the same conclusion. It is a low threshold.

You may have a belief on reasonable grounds, such that a Mandatory Report should be made, if:

- you witness the physical or sexual abuse of a child
- a child tells you that they have been physically or sexually abused
- a child tells you that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused
- someone who knows the child tells you that the child has been physically or sexually abused
- a child shows physical or behavioural signs of being physically or sexually abused.

How to Make a Mandatory Report

If a Mandatory Report is necessary, the person must inform either the Principal or a Child Safeguarding Officer that they intend to do so. The Principal or CPO will additionally lodge this information via the Child Protection Incident Notification form on the Assurance system as per the [Incident Notification and Management Framework](#).

Mandatory Reports must be made to DFFH Child Protection, or in an emergency to the Police.

Reports can be made to DFFH Child Protection:

- during business hours (8:45am-5:00pm, Monday to Friday), by telephoning the DFFH Child Protection intake service for the local government area where the child resides, listed [here](#).
- after hours, by telephoning DFFH Child Protection on **13 12 78**.

Mandatory Reporting and Other External Reports

Overseas Students

Where St Patrick's College is aware of or makes a Mandatory Report, the College must also notify the VRQA if the alleged abuse or other harm relates to an overseas student and the College has issued a Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation and Welfare (CAAW) letter in relation to that student, thereby assuming responsibility for approving the student's accommodation, support and general welfare.

2.3 Non-Mandatory Reporting to DFFH Child Protection

Under the law, **anyone** can report the following to DFFH Child Protection:

- significant concerns for the wellbeing of a child aged under 17 (wellbeing reports)**
- a child aged under 17 who the person believes on reasonable grounds to be in need of protection (protective intervention reports)
- a child aged under 18 who the person believes on reasonable grounds is in need of therapeutic treatment because they are exhibiting sexually abusive behaviours (therapeutic treatment reports).

**For example, parental substance misuse, psychiatric illness or intellectual disability that is impacting on a student's safety, stability or development.

We refer to these reports as "Non-Mandatory Reports to DFFH Child Protection".

All of these reports are voluntary under the law. This means that all School-Based Staff, students, parents/carers, external education providers, Contractors, Volunteers or other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse or other harm can report to DFFH Child Protection, or they can contact a Child Safeguarding Officer, listed above.

However, the Four Critical Actions/Student Sexual Offending Four Critical Actions require that **School-Based Staff and Volunteers(including those who are not Mandatory Reporters)must** make wellbeing

reports, protective intervention reports and therapeutic treatment reports to DFFH Child Protection (or, in some circumstances, to the Police or Child FIRST/the Orange Door**).

Therefore, it is St Patrick's College's's policy that **School-Based Staff and Volunteers must** make wellbeing reports, protective intervention reports and therapeutic treatment reports to either DFFH Child Protection, the Police or Child FIRST/the Orange Door.**

For guidance on the different kinds of Non-Mandatory Reports and when to report/who to report to/how to report, refer to the protocol [PROTECT Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#) and the College's **Non-Mandatory Reporting to Child Protection Policy and Procedures**.

**Child and Family Information, Referral and Support Teams (Child FIRST) were introduced to give families an opportunity to obtain family services earlier at their own request or following a referral from others, including School-Based Staff. Child FIRST is progressively transitioning to The Orange Door. The Orange Door is the new access point for women, children and young people who are experiencing family violence, or families who need assistance with the care and wellbeing of children to access the services they need to be safe and supported.

Child FIRST and The Orange Door ensure that vulnerable children, young people and their families are linked effectively to relevant services. They are staffed by family services practitioners who are experienced in assessing the needs of vulnerable children and their families. Child FIRST and The Orange Door teams work closely with community-based DFFH Child Protection workers.

The role of Child FIRST/The Orange Door includes:

- providing a point of entry to a local network of family services
- receiving reports about vulnerable children where there are significant concerns about their wellbeing
- undertaking an initial identification and assessment of the risks to the child and the child's needs in consultation with DFFH Child Protection
- identifying appropriate service responses for families.

2.4 Failure to Disclose: Obligation to Report Sexual Offences Against Children to Police

Victorian law requires that any adult (a person aged 18 or over) who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by another adult against a child aged under 16 must report that information to the Police, except in certain circumstances.

We call this “Obligation to Report Sexual Offences Against Children to Police”.

Failure to do this is a criminal offence known as “Failure to Disclose”.

Who has an Obligation to Report Sexual Offences Against Children to Police?

Any adult at the College, including **all School-Based Staff and Volunteers who are adults, must** report to Police when they have the required belief.

When is there an Obligation to Report Sexual Offences Against Children to Police?

School-Based Staff and Volunteers must make these reports when they have a **reasonable belief** that:

- an adult (including a School-Based Staff member, Volunteer, Contractor, parent/carer or any other adult including student sexual offending in circumstances when the student who has allegedly engaged in sexual offending is 18 years of age or over)
- has committed a sexual offence
- against a person who, at the time of the offence, was aged under 16 (including but not limited to current or former students).

It does not matter whether the adult is associated with the College.

Sexual offences committed against a child aged under 16 by a student at the College aged under 18 do not fall under the Failure to Disclose offence. However, they must still be reported to Police under College policy (refer to **Non-Mandatory Reporting to Police** below).

What is a Reasonable Belief?

A “reasonable belief” is formed if another person in the same position would have formed the same belief on the same grounds.

A “reasonable belief” might be formed when:

- a child tells you that they are being or have been sexually abused
- a person aged over 16 tells you that they were sexually abused when they were aged under 16

- a child tells you that they know someone who is being or has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- someone who knows a child tells you that the child is being or has been sexually abused
- signs of sexual abuse lead you to believe that a child is being or has been sexually abused.

How to Report to Police

- In emergencies, or if the crime is happening now or has just happened and the suspected offender may still be in the area: call 000
- All other matters: call your local police station, the details of which you can find [here](#).

2.5 Obligation to Act: Non-Mandatory Reporting to Police

The Four Critical Actions/Student Sexual Offending Four Critical Actions require, and therefore it is St Patrick's College's policy, that **all School-Based Staff and Volunteers** must report the following to Police, even though this is not required by law:

- sexual offences committed by a student aged under 18 against any other person (refer to **Responding to Student Sexual Offending** below)
- concerns for a student's immediate safety (refer to **Responding to an Emergency** above)
- knowledge or suspicions that a student aged 18 or over is being abused or harmed, but only if the student consents to the report (or, if they do not consent, only if reporting would lessen or prevent a serious or imminent threat to a person's life, health, safety or welfare)
- where a student is partaking in illegal activity that is extreme in nature or poses a high risk to the student (refer to **Responding to Other Concerns About the Wellbeing of a Student** below).

2.6 Reportable Conduct

Victorian law requires the "head" of the College to report to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) any allegation that an "**employee**" of the College (defined below) has committed "Reportable Conduct" or misconduct that may involve Reportable Conduct (a reportable allegation). They must also conduct an appropriate investigation into the matter, and report the outcome to the CCYP.

CCYP is an independent statutory body that promotes improvement in policies and practices affecting the safety and wellbeing of Victorian children and young people.

CCYP is responsible for administering the Reportable Conduct Scheme, which includes:

- supporting and guiding organisations that receive allegations in order to promote fair, effective, timely and appropriate responses
- independently overseeing, monitoring and, where appropriate, making recommendations to improve the responses of those organisations.

The “head of entity” of EREA VSL schools is the EREA VSL Chief Executive Officer for EREA VSL. They have authorised the Principal at St Patrick's College to receive internal reports about Reportable Conduct, to assist them in meeting their obligations. They have also authorised the Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) Safeguarding and Standards Unit to undertake the following functions required under the Reportable Conduct Scheme, to assist them in meeting their obligations:

- notifying and updating the CCYP of reportable allegations about the College’s employees
- ensuring that investigations are undertaken into all reportable allegations made against the College’s employees
- complying with all obligations of the “head” of the College under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

What is Reportable Conduct?

Reportable Conduct is defined in the [Child Safety and Safeguarding Policy: Master Definitions List](#).

Who is an Employee?

For the purposes of the Reportable Conduct Scheme, an **employee** is anyone aged 18 or over who is:

- employed by the College, (i.e., all adult School-Based Staff members)
- engaged by the College to provide services as a Volunteer, Contractor, office holder or other officer (i.e., all adult Volunteers and all adult Contractors).

It does not matter whether their work or activities relate to or involve providing services to children.

Internal Reporting of Reportable Conduct

St Patrick's College requires that **all School-Based Staff (including Direct Contact Contractors) and all Volunteers (including College Advisory Council members)** who:

- form a reasonable belief that
- an employee at the College has engaged in Reportable Conduct or misconduct that may involve Reportable Conduct

must immediately report their concerns to the Principal (or to the EREA VSL Chief Executive Officer or the Director of Human Resources, Risk and Compliance Mr. Jamie Bobrowski if the allegation involves the Principal).

They **must** also consider their obligations under this policy to make a report to DFFH Child Protection or to Police, take any other action or make any other external reports. School-Based Staff and Volunteers may seek further guidance from a Child Safeguarding Officer.

NB This enables the Principal (or EREA VSL Director of Safeguarding) and the MACS Safeguarding and Standards Unit to fulfil their authorised obligations (and therefore enables the EREA VSL Chief Executive Officer to meet their legal obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme).

Any other School-Based Staff (e.g. Regular and Casual Contractors) and any member of the College community can report concerns about Reportable Conduct by a College employee to the Principal (or to the Director of Human Resources, Risk and Compliance Mr. Jamie Bobrowski if the allegation involves the Principal).

Any School-Based Staff member or Volunteer can also or instead make a report directly to the CCYP, by calling 1300 78 29 78 or emailing contact@ccyp.vic.gov.au.

The College's Response to Reportable Allegations

When they become aware of a reportable allegation (whether through receiving an internal report of Reportable Conduct, through receiving a complaint from a student, parent/carer or anyone else, or through any other means), **the Principal (or the Director of Human Resources, Risk and Compliance Mr. Jamie Bobrowski if the allegation involves the Principal) must:**

- immediately contact the MACS Safeguarding and Standards Unit, who will provide advice about whether or not the matter involves Reportable Conduct; and
- if it does:
 - raise an EREA VSL Child Safety Incident notification
 - take any necessary interim action to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child/ren involved and students at the College during the MACS Safeguarding and Standards Unit's investigation; and

- at the conclusion of the MACS Safeguarding and Standards Unit’s investigation, implement any required measures to minimise any further risk of harm to students at the College.

The **MACS Safeguarding and Standards Unit** will:

- notify the EREA VSL Chief Executive Officer of the matter
- notify the CCYP as soon as possible, and no later than three business days after becoming aware of the reportable allegation
- report the matter to Police if the reportable allegation involves possible criminal conduct
- ensure that an appropriate internal investigation is conducted into the reportable allegation (subject to Police advice, if the matter has been reported to Police, and to consultation with DFFH Child Protection, if the matter has been reported to DFFH Child Protection) and notify the CCYP of the person who will be conducting the internal investigation
- provide the CCYP with an update about the College’s response to the reportable allegation within 30 days of becoming aware of it
- if, as a result of the internal investigation, a finding is made that the reportable allegation is “substantiated”, report this to relevant regulators such as the Victorian Institute of Teaching or Working with Children Check Victoria and, if the finding involves a criminal offence, to Police if a report has not already been made
- notify the CCYP of the outcome of the internal investigation as soon as practicable after it has concluded.

2.7 Teacher Misconduct that is Reportable to the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT)

The Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) is an independent statutory authority for the teaching profession, whose primary function is to regulate members of the teaching profession.

Registered teachers in Victoria are exempt from the Working with Children Check (WWCC) scheme. To align teacher registration with the WWCC scheme, Victorian law requires that registered teachers notify the VIT if they are charged with, committed for trial for, or convicted or found guilty of certain criminal offences (that accord with those relevant to WWCCs) or if they have been issued with a negative notice in relation to the WWCC.

The Principal must notify the VIT if they become aware that a teacher has been charged with, or convicted or found guilty of, these criminal offences or has been given a negative notice.

The Principal **must** dismiss or remove from its employment or engagement any teacher who has been convicted or found guilty of these criminal offences or been given a negative notice.

The Principal **must** also notify the VIT if the College has taken **any** action against a registered teacher in response to allegations that raise concerns about the teacher's fitness to teach.

To enable St Patrick's College to fulfil its obligations, it requires that:

- **School-Based Staff who are registered teachers must** inform the Principal (or, if they are the Principal, either the EREA VSL Chief Executive Officer or the EREA VSL Director of Safeguarding) if they are charged with, committed for trial for, or convicted or found guilty of a relevant offence or if they have been given a negative notice in relation to a WWCC
- **all School-Based Staff members must** immediately report to the Principal (or, if the incident or allegation involves the Principal, to either the EREA VSL Chief Executive Officer or the EREA VSL Director of Safeguarding) any incident or allegation that raises concerns about a teacher's fitness to teach.

2.8 Responding to Sexual Behaviour in Children and to Student Sexual Offending

Knowing how to identify and respond to all sexual behaviour in students, whether it be age-appropriate, concerning, harmful or student sexual offending, helps School-Based Staff and Volunteers to support the development of healthy sexuality and protect students from abuse and other harm.

Recognising and Responding to Sexual Behaviour in Children

The College references the True Traffic Lights® Framework to enable School-Based Staff and Volunteers to identify, recognise and respond to all forms of sexual behaviour. The Traffic Lights® Framework categorises sexual behaviour as green, orange or red light.

As a general guide:

- **Red light sexual behaviours** are those that are problematic or harmful, including forceful, secretive, compulsive, coercive or degrading sexual behaviours. These behaviours signal the need to provide immediate protection and follow up support.
- **Orange light sexual behaviours** are those that are outside normal behaviour in terms of persistence, frequency or inequality in age, power or ability. These concerning behaviours signal the need to monitor and provide extra support.

- **Green light sexual behaviours** are those that are normal, age-appropriate, spontaneous, curious, mutual, light-hearted and easily diverted experimentation. These behaviours provide opportunities to talk, explain and support.

All green, orange and red light behaviours require some form of action and support.

Most red light (harmful) sexual behaviour by a student aged 10 or over that is directed at another person would be considered **student sexual offending**. Some orange light (concerning) behaviours could also be student sexual offending.

Orange and red light behaviours may therefore require external reporting to DFFH Child Protection and/or the Police.

To enable the College to respond appropriately to students with concerning or harmful sexual behaviour, it requires that **School-Based Staff members, Direct Contact Volunteers and Direct Contact Contractors** must report orange light and red light sexual behaviours to a Child Safeguarding Officer.

Contact details for our Child Safeguarding Officers are set out in the **Responsibilities** section, above.

Responding to Student Sexual Offending

Student sexual offending refers to sexual behaviour that:

- is led by a student aged 10 or over; and
- is directed at another person; and
- amounts to a sexual offence.

The College requires that, when **School-Based Staff members, Direct Contact Volunteers and Direct Contact Contractors** become aware of, or suspect, student sexual offending, or that a student is at risk of perpetrating or suffering student sexual offending, they **must** follow the Student Sexual Offending Four Critical Actions (Appendix 2).

St Patrick's College and the Student Sexual Offending Four Critical Actions require that incidents of or concerns about student sexual offending **must** be reported to Police, and that additional reports **must** be made, if relevant, to DFFH Child Protection or Child FIRST/Orange Door. The Principal is responsible for coordinating reports to authorities.

- In emergencies, or if the student sexual offending is happening now or has just happened and the student offender may still be in the area: call 000
- All other matters: call your local police station, the details of which you can find [here](#).

For guidance on identifying and responding to student sexual offending, refer to the protocol [PROTECT Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#) and the College's [Recognising and Responding to Sexual Behaviour in Children and to Student Sexual Offending Policies and Procedures](#).

School-Based Staff and Volunteers must ensure that continuing support is offered to all students involved in an allegation of student sexual offending including:

- any students who are victims of student sexual offending
- students who have engaged in student sexual offending; and
- any other students who are impacted by the student sexual offending.

2.9 Responding to Other Concerns About the Wellbeing of a Student

Any concerns about the wellbeing of a student, regardless of whether it has been caused by abuse or other harm, will be taken seriously and acted on.

The College and **School-Based Staff and Volunteers who have students under their care** owe a duty of care to all students at the College to ensure that they feel safe and are supported at the College.

Concerns about the wellbeing of a student, that do not appear to be the result of abuse or other harm, may still be reported by School-Based Staff and Volunteers to:

- Internally, a Child Safeguarding Officer
- Police
- DFFH Child Protection
- Child FIRST/The Orange Door,

depending on the age of the student and the nature of the concern.

The College will also consider whether a referral to a support service may assist.

For guidance on the kinds of situations that should be reported and to whom, refer to the College's [Responding to Other Concerns About the Wellbeing of a Student Policy and Procedures](#).

2.10 Child Safeguarding Record Keeping

St Patrick's College is committed to best practice record keeping in accordance with Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards (including minimum retention periods). St Patrick's College makes, retains and secures records of complaints and concern in line with our [Child Safeguarding Record Keeping Policy and Procedures](#).

All internal and external reports of child safety incidents and concerns, as well as any other responses by the College must be recorded using [PROTECT Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse - A Template for Victorian Schools](#) or, if the matter involves student sexual offending, [PROTECT Responding to Suspected Student Sexual Offending: A Template for all Victorian Schools](#).

School-Based Staff members must complete the relevant sections of these forms. In the case of Volunteers or Contractors, this may instead be done by or with the assistance of a Child Safeguarding Officer or the Principal. Completed forms must then be provided to a Child Safeguarding Officer or the Principal.

As the various responses of the College occur, a Child Safeguarding Officer or the Principal must record these in the relevant sections of the form in line with our [Child Safeguarding Record Keeping Policy and Procedures](#).

3. Critical Action Three: Contact Parents/Carers

3.1 Communicating with Parents/Carers About Internal and External Reports

It is usually critical that the parents/carers of a student who is the subject of a child safety incident or concern are notified as soon as practicable when an internal report has been received and/or that an external report has been or will be made. This enables the student's parents/carers to take steps to prevent or limit their child's exposure to further abuse or other harm and ensure that their child receives the support that is needed. However, this may not be appropriate in all circumstances.

- If a report has been or will be made to DFFH Child Protection or Police, then **the Principal or Senior Child Safeguarding Officer must** seek advice from DFFH Child Protection or Police (depending on who the report has been made to) before contacting parents/carers. They will advise whether it is appropriate to contact parents/carers at this stage and if so, what information can be shared with the parents/carers.

- If the matter involves an internal investigation of Reportable Conduct, then by law, **the EREA VSL Chief Executive Officer** (or, where authorised, **the Principal** or **the Director of Human Resources, Risk and Compliance Mr. Jamie Bobrowski** on their behalf) **can** share information about the progress of the investigation, its findings and recommendations, and actions taken, with the child and their parents/carers. They **must** take into account a number of factors when deciding whether, to what extent, and at what point in the investigation, information about the matter should be shared with the child and their parents/carers.
- Where information about an external report can be shared with parents/carers, **the Principal or Senior Child Safeguarding Officer must** make sensitive and professional contact with the parents/carers as soon as practicable after the child safety incident or concern occurred or arose. All communications will be sensitive to the diversity and needs of the families.

4. Critical Action Four: Provide Support

4.1 Support for Students, Families and School-Based Staff and Volunteers Following Child Safety Incident or Disclosure

Supporting Students

Ensuring that a student feels safe and supported following an incident is critically important to our College.

St Patrick's College employs a range of measures to support students affected by a child safety incident or concern (including students making reports), depending on the particular circumstances of the matter and of the student and their family:

- Child Safeguarding Officers may work with the student and their family to develop a Student Support Plan, including academic support.
- Support strategies that could be considered for students and/or their families might include offering or organising referrals to internal or external support, such as the College counsellor, family counsellor, bi-cultural workers and/or translators, or an external support agency and/or child advocacy organisation which specialises in supporting children and young people impacted by abuse or other harm.
- School-Based Staff and Volunteers will respond to a student who raises or is affected by a complaint or concern in a positive and supportive matter, using language appropriate for the student's age and capacity, staying calm and reassuring the student of their support. They will

help the student understand that they cannot keep the disclosure confidential between the and the student.

The College offers similar support to former students who disclose historical child safety incidents or concerns from their time at the College.

Supporting School-Based Staff and Volunteers

Witnessing a child safety incident or receiving a disclosure of abuse or other harm can be a distressing experience for the School-Based Staff or Volunteer involved. The College assists impacted School-Based Staff and Volunteers to access necessary support.

For more information, refer to Appendix 1 of the [Child Safeguarding Complaints Management Policy and Procedures](#) and our **Staff Support Program**.

Supporting our College Community

Key principles that we apply in the design of policy, procedure, interventions, support and reporting in our Child Safety and Safeguarding Program are to ensure that we promote the:

- cultural safety of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- cultural safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- safety of children with any form of disability
- safety of students who are unable to live at home
- safety of international students
- safety of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTQIA+) students.

Student Awareness

St Patrick's College is committed to the protection of all children and young people from all forms of child abuse and other harm. It is important that all our students are educated about how to raise any concerns and we raise their awareness of child safety concerns and concerning behaviours to report. We have designed and are implementing a comprehensive child safety curriculum with age-appropriate education and awareness programs. This curriculum, further supported by our actions and processes, empowers our students to have a voice and to take action for their own care.

5. Organisational Duty of Care

Section 91 of the Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic) imposes a duty of care on the College, as an organisation, to take reasonable precautions to:

- prevent the physical or sexual abuse of a child under its care, supervision or authority
- by an individual associated with the College.

If a victim of physical or sexual abuse that is alleged to have occurred at the College or to have involved our School-Based Staff, Volunteers or Contractors, brings a negligence claim against the College, a court will presume that the College breached its duty of care unless the College can prove that we took reasonable precautions to prevent the abuse.

Reasonable precautions to prevent the physical or sexual abuse of students at the College includes:

- conducting employment screening and reference checking
- providing supervision and training to School-Based Staff and relevant Volunteers and Contractors
- implementing systems to provide early warning of possible sexual or physical abuse by School-Based Staff, Volunteers and Contractors
- performing random and unannounced inspections to deter misconduct
- encouraging children and adults to report to the College and/or external authorities any signs of inappropriate behaviour
- implementing improvements following a review of our policies and procedures, either as part of our regular review process or after a particular child safety incident.

5.1 Documenting Reasonable Precautions to Prevent Physical and Sexual Abuse

St Patrick's College is committed to best practice record keeping in accordance with Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards (including minimum retention periods). St Patrick's College makes, retains and secures records of complaints and concerns in line with our [Child Safeguarding Record Keeping Policy and Procedures](#).

These records must be kept for at least 50 years.

6. Privacy and Confidentiality

Anyone who has access to information regarding a case of suspected child abuse or other harm must keep such information confidential and secure and must only disclose or discuss this information with those involved in managing the situation.

Reports or referrals made to DFFH Child Protection or Child FIRST/The Orange Door are confidential, and the reporter's identity is generally protected by law. Exceptions include if:

- the reporter chooses to inform the child or family of the report
- the reporter consents in writing to their identity being disclosed
- a court or tribunal decides it is necessary for the identity of the reporter to be disclosed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child
- a court or tribunal decides the reporter is required to attend court to provide evidence.

The identity of the person who makes a report to the Police, including reports under section 327 of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) (Obligation to Report a Sexual Offence), will remain confidential unless:

- the person themselves discloses their identity or they consent in writing to their identity being disclosed
- a court or tribunal decides that it is necessary in the interests of justice for the person's identity to be disclosed.

A person who makes a Mandatory Report in accordance with the CYF Act or a report under the CWS Act (Reportable Conduct Scheme) will not be held liable for the eventual outcome of any investigation.

Implementation

This Policy and its Procedures are published on the College's public website.

They are provided to new School-Based Staff members, to Direct Contact and Regular Volunteers and to Direct Contact and Regular Contractors at induction. Training about the Child Safeguarding Reporting and Responding Obligations Policy and Procedures is also included in annual refresher training for Staff and relevant volunteers and contractors.

The College provides all Visitors to the College, and Casual Volunteers and Casual Contractors, with information about the Child Safeguarding Reporting and Responding Obligations Policy and Procedures (including in particular how to report child safety incidents or concerns to the College and

to relevant external authorities) through Signing in at Reception via Passtab, posters on college noticeboards and directed to college website..

This Policy and its Procedures are also made accessible to School-Based Staff, Volunteers, Contractors and other members of the College community by communicating them through other mediums such as Complispace-PolicyConnect and Staff Learning Systems, SafeTripBuilder, Passtab, College Website, Contracts, Newsletters, Annual Reports, Annual briefings and the Crest..

The College makes this Policy and its Procedures accessible to students by communicating them through Newsletters, Memo, Shamrock, College Annual.

Breach of This Policy and Procedures

The College enforces this Policy and its Procedures. The Policy Owner (see Person Responsible under Policy Administration below) monitors compliance with this Policy and its Procedures. The Principal will monitor the College's compliance with this Policy and its Procedures.

In the event of any non-compliance, EREA VSL will instigate a review, in a timely and fair manner, 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.

All breaches and near misses related to this Policy or its Procedures must be reported as a Compliance Breach in Assurance by the College's Director of Human Resources, Risk and Compliance and are monitored by the EREA VSL Risk and Compliance Manager.

Risks identified related to the implementation of this Policy and its Procedures are reported to the Policy Owner to support continuous improvement.

Policy Review

A review of this Child Safeguarding Reporting and Responding Obligations Policy and Procedures is conducted every two years or earlier if required, such as due to changes in legislation or after any significant child safety incident.

The EREA VSL Board is responsible for ensuring that this Policy and its Procedures are reviewed and updated as needed and for approving this Policy and its Procedures.

Analysing Complaints, Concerns and Safety Incidents

The College will ensure that complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures and inform continuous improvement, as outlined in the [Child Safeguarding Complaints Management Policy and Procedures](#).

EREA VSL and St Patrick's College Policy and Procedures Linkages

The Child Safeguarding Reporting and Responding Obligations Policy and Procedures are to be read and understood in conjunction with:

- [Child Safeguarding Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct \(Vic\)](#)
- [Child Safeguarding Complaints Management Policy and Procedures](#)

Child Safeguarding Record Keeping Policy and Procedures

Child Safeguarding Training and Supervision Policy and Procedures

Child Safeguarding Risk Management Policy and Procedures

Source of Obligation

The Child Safeguarding Reporting and Responding Obligations Policy and Procedures implement:

- [Ministerial Order 1359](#), Clauses 11.2(e), 11.3 and 11.4
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
- Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic)

- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)

Related Forms and Documents

- Child Safeguarding Complaints Management Policy and Procedures (Child-Friendly Version available Policy Connect)
- Available on College website.
- Department of Education, Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and Independent Schools Victoria, [PROTECT Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse - A Template for Victorian Schools](#)
- Department of Education, Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and Independent Schools Victoria, [PROTECT Responding to Suspected Student Sexual Offending: Template for all Victorian Schools](#)
- [PROTECT Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victoria Schools](#)

References and Resources

- Department of Education, Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and Independent Schools Victoria, [PROTECT Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#), 2018
- Department of Education, Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and Independent Schools Victoria, [PROTECT Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#), 2018

Policy Administration

Responsible Officer	EREA VSL Chief Executive Officer
Policy Owner	EREA VSL Director of Safeguarding
Approving Body	EREA VSL Board
Approval Date	February 2024

Risk Rating	High
Date of next review	February 2026
Policy Database Information	
Version	1.0
Related Documents	
Superseded Documents	

Appendices

Appendix 1

Department of Education, Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and Independent Schools Victoria, PROTECT Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse, 2018

Appendix 2

Department of Education, Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and Independent Schools Victoria, PROTECT Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending, 2018

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[1] *The “Child Safety and Safeguarding Program” is the name given to the full collection of policies and procedures that assist the College to be a child safe organisation and to meet the requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 1359. It includes not only policies and procedures for responding and reporting child safety incidents and concerns, but also policies and procedures about:*

- **child safe human resources management (including WWC clearances)**
- **participation and empowerment of students**
- **informing and involving families and relevant communities in child safeguarding issues**
- **equity and diversity**
- **child safeguarding risk management strategies**
- **strategies for embedding a culture of child safety at the College and**
- *regular reviews and continuous improvement of child safeguarding policies, procedures and practices.*

These other policies and procedures are summarised in our Child Safeguarding Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures.