



# Child Safety and Safeguarding Program

## Child Safeguarding Students with Disability 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.

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, the College's and the Boarding School's governing authority, has approved St Patrick's College's Child Safeguarding Students with Disability 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

**St Patrick's College (the College) is committed to providing a safe and supportive learning environment.**

To be a child safe environment, the College must have and implement a variety of strategies to ensure the safety of students with disability and to respect and value these students, their families and relevant communities.

In particular, Standard 5 of the Victorian Child Safe Standards requires the College to uphold equity and respect diverse needs in policy and practice.

To implement this Standard, Ministerial Order 1359 requires The EREA VSL Board to develop and endorse a policy, statement or curriculum document that details the strategies and actions that the College and the Boarding School will take to meet a number of specific requirements relating to students with disability, including to:

- understand the diverse circumstances of students and to provide support and respond to vulnerable students
- provide access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are accessible and easy to understand
- pay particular attention to the needs of vulnerable students, including in particular students with disability.

St Patrick's College recognises the importance of promoting understanding and acceptance of diversity, including disability, to create and maintain a child safe environment.

The College has an obligation to students with disability to ensure that they are afforded the same level of educational and pastoral care as any other student at the College. It considers how each policy and procedure that the College establishes and implements may affect students with disability.

The College recognises that students with disability will not only require additional assistance to participate and engage in College activities in a safe and supportive manner, but also that there are specific child safety risks that arise in relation to students with disability. Children with disability are at a higher risk of abuse or other harm, such as harassment, bullying, humiliation and physical and sexual abuse, and are also often less likely to disclose abuse or other concerns about their safety.

This is because of:

- low levels of expectation held about their capacity to identify and report concerns
- reliance on caregivers for personal requirements
- limited provision of developmentally appropriate sexual and relationship information
- difficulties with speech, communication or literacy
- social isolation.

This Policy and its Procedures set out how the College promotes the safety of students with disability as required by the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 1359. In particular, this

includes partnering with families, carers and communities and promoting equity and respecting diversity.

## Principles

EREA Victorian Schools Ltd. (EREA VSL) and St Patrick's College are committed to ensuring the safety, wellbeing, and participation of all students. We have no tolerance for child abuse.

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 The EREA VSL Board and St Patrick's College in the development and regular review of the Child Safeguarding Students with Disability Policy and Procedures.

## Scope

For the purposes of this Policy and its Procedures, references to the College include the Boarding School.

This Policy and its Procedures apply to all School-Based Staff, including School Boarding Premises Staff, Volunteers and Contractors.

They 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 of school hours, on-site and off-site College grounds (e.g. extra-curricular activities such as sport and other programs, camps and excursions, interstate and overseas travel), and environments provided by External Education Providers and other Contractors.

## Definitions

Definitions of particular terms used in this Policy and its Procedures can be found in the [Child Safety and Safeguarding Policy: Master Definitions List](#).

# Roles and Responsibilities

In addition to relevant roles and responsibilities as set out in [Child Safety and Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities Policy and Procedures](#), the following people have particular responsibilities under this Policy and its Procedures.

The College's Senior Child Safeguarding Officer is Mr Jamie Bobrowski.

The Boarding School Senior Child Safeguarding Officer Deputy is Mr James Hopper.

The College's Assistant Principal-Pastoral Care and Wellbeing Kevin Robillard.

The School Principal Steven O'Connor.

## St Patrick's College's Policy

1. St Patrick's College is committed to ensuring that we fulfil our legal obligations including those related to discrimination and disability standards (refer to our [Disability Discrimination Policy](#)).
2. The College does not stereotype or make assumptions about students' abilities, but rather recognises that each student is different and experiences their disability and the world differently.
3. The College considers how each policy and procedure that the College establishes and implements may affect students with disability.
4. The College implements a number of strategies and initiatives, as set out in Students with Disability Safety Strategies, below, to ensure that the College is a safe environment for students with disability.
5. The College implements specific risk controls in relation to the safety of students with disability, as set out in Students with Disability Safety Risk Controls, below.

## Procedures

### Students with Disability Safety Strategies

St Patrick's College implements the following strategies and initiatives to ensure and promote the safety of students with disability:

- we ensure that our Child Safeguarding Codes of Conduct clearly outline boundaries for School-Based Staff, Volunteers' and Contractors' interactions with students with disability, including personal care assistance
- we seek and take into account disability expert advice when developing and reviewing strategies for addressing child safeguarding, child safety information and processes for students and families to raise child safety concerns
- we empower students with disability by assisting them to build their self-confidence
- we teach all students about their bodies and their safety (refer to [Child Safeguarding Student Participation and Empowerment Policy and Procedures](#))
- we actively engage with students and their families about how they would like to be involved by:
  - providing an environment where they feel safe and valued
  - creating opportunities for families to voice concerns and to help define solutions
  - holding informal meetings or surveys to proactively seek and incorporate feedback on existing systems and policies
  - communicating directly with students with disability about how safe they feel.

## Students with Disability Safety Risk Controls

St Patrick's College implements the following specific risk controls, in relation to the safety of students with disability:

- express, written permission from the parent/carer of a student with disability where physical contact is required as part of their care
- actively nurture and promote a culture where everyone is treated with respect and dignity
- ensure that children and young people are not discriminated against (directly or indirectly) and where necessary, adjustments are made as required to participate in their education and school activities (e.g., schools sports, concerts, formals on the same basis as their peers)
- acknowledge and respond to the diverse needs, identities, and strengths of all children and young person
- encourage empathy and fairness towards others
- challenge stereotypes that promote prejudicial and biased behaviours and practices
- contribute to positive learning, engagement, and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people
- respond to complaints and allegations appropriately and ensure that children and young people are not victimised.

# Implementation

This Policy and its Procedures are made available to all School-Based Staff, Volunteers, and Contractors, via the College's PolicyConnect site. They are included in induction training and in ongoing refresher training for School-Based Staff and relevant Volunteers and Contractors. For more information, refer to [Child Safeguarding Training and Supervision Policy and Procedures](#).

They are made accessible to parents/carers, students and the wider College community in summary in our [Child Safeguarding Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures](#), which is available on our public website as well as Complispace-PolicyConnect and Staff Learning Systems, SafeTripBuilder, Passtab, College Website, Contracts, Newsletters, Annual Reports, Annual briefings and the Crest..

They are also available in hard copy by request.

## Breach of Child Safeguarding Students with Disability Policy and Procedures (Child Safeguarding)

St Patrick's College enforces this Policy and its Procedures. In the event of any non-compliance, we 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.

For more information, refer to [Child Safeguarding Compliance and Breach Policy and Procedures](#).

## Policy Review

A review of the Child Safeguarding Students with Disability Policy and Procedure 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.

## Source of Obligation and Related Legislative Instruments

- [Ministerial Order 1359, Clause 9](#)

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

- [Child Safeguarding Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Child Safeguarding Student Participation and Empowerment Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Family and Community Involvement in Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Child Safeguarding Regular Reviews and Continuous Improvement Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Child Safety Code of Conduct Policy and Procedures](#)

## Related Forms and Documents

## References and Resources

Commission for Children and Young People, [Tip Sheet: Child Safe Organisations – Safety of children with a disability](#).

## Policy Administration

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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
<b>Policy Database Information</b>	
Version	1.0
Related Documents	
Superseded Documents	