

CHILD SAFE GOVERNANCE POLICY

Rationale

Damascus College Limited Board (The Board) is committed to:

- zero tolerance of child abuse;
- listening to and empowering children and young people; and
- keeping children and young people safe.

The Board maintains governance oversight of the school Damascus College which operates primarily from 1412 Geelong Rd, Mt Clear. The Board executes its management responsibility through the Principal and the Leadership Team of the College to ensure Damascus College is safe for children and young people and is a place where children and young people can flourish.

The Damascus College Limited Child Safety policies, procedures, and documents are developed by the College Leadership Team and approved by the Board. The members of the association have visibility of the development and approval process. The documents provide the principles and key elements of Board's approach to managing its responsibilities and obligations for the care, safety, and welfare of students at Damascus College to minimise the risk of the abuse of children and young people. Damascus College Policies and procedures have been developed in collaboration with the framework established within Catholic Education Ballarat from the Victorian Regulatory and Qualifications Authority guidelines.

Damascus College is committed to supporting its schools to take a proactive role in the care, wellbeing and protection of children and young people.

The Board has particular responsibilities for the safeguarding of children and young people as required by Ministerial Order No. 870: Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools (MO 870). This places accountability for managing the risk of child abuse with the Board. Consistent with MO 870, the Board, requires Damascus College owned and operated by Damascus College Limited to have appropriate arrangements to regulate the conduct and decisions of school staff for the benefit of its students. These arrangements include implementing and complying with the Board's Child Safe Policies and having clear and comprehensive procedures and reporting mechanisms. The objective is for the Board, and the wider school community is to be confident in the school's capacity to make and implement appropriate decisions, with child safety as a guiding principle.

The Board is cognisant of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (National Principles) that has been endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The Board understands that the Victorian Government is currently reviewing the

Victorian Standards to better align with the National Principles, however in the interim the Ministerial Order 870: Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools (MO 870) remain in operation and mandatory for Damascus College. Therefore, our Child Safety Standards policies and procedures reflect the current requirements in Victoria being the MO 870.

This policy demonstrates the strong commitment of the Board to the care, safety and wellbeing of all children and young people in accordance with its obligations as the governing authority of Damascus College. It outlines the policies approved by the Board and the procedures and strategies adopted to keep children and young people safe from harm.

This policy takes into account relevant legislative requirements within the state of Victoria, including the specific requirements of MO 870 relevant to the obligations of a governing authority of schools.

Principles

Gospel values and the principles of Catholic Social Teaching are reflected in Damascus College policies for the care, safety, and welfare of students. These values influence both Board actions and response to promoting environments that are child safe:

The Code of Conduct has been developed to promote the principles laid out in the *Integrity in the Service of the Church*, a document produced by the National Committee for Professional Standards, 2011. A Committee of the Australian Catholic Bishops & the Leaders of Religious Institutes in Australia. A full explanation of the Guiding Principles is contained in the publication: *National Committee for Professional Standards, 2011, "Integrity in the Service of the Church"*, September 2011. [file \(catholic.org.au\)](http://file.catholic.org.au)

The five Guiding Principles are:

- *Commitment to Justice and Equity*
- *Upholding the dignity of all people and their right to respect*
- *Commitment to safe and supportive relationships*
- *Reaching out to those who are poor, alienated or marginalised*
- *Striving for excellence in the performance of their work*

An integral part of fulfilling these guiding principles is an absolute commitment to child safety and adherence to the Child Safe Standards, as outlined in Ministerial Order No. 870.

The Child Safe Standards are;

Standard 1: governance and leadership

- Strong and clear governance arrangements allow leaders to ensure child safety is a focus within their organisation.

Standard 2: clear commitment to child safety

- Demonstrate your commitment to child safety by documenting how your organisation will meet its duty of care and responsibilities.

Standard 3: code of conduct

- Establish clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.

Standard 4: human resource practices

- Develop and implement human resource practices that reduce the risk of child abuse occurring within your organisation.

Standard 5: responding and reporting

- All staff and volunteers must understand their role in keeping children safe, including their reporting responsibilities.

Standard 6: risk management and mitigation

- To reduce the likelihood of harm, organisations must think about and define the risks.

Standard 7: empowering children

- Children have a right to be heard and have their concerns and ideas taken seriously.

Purpose

Damascus College is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for all students of the College and College community. This Policy demonstrates the strong commitment of the Damascus College community to child safety and to provide an outline of the policies to keep everyone safe from harm, including all forms of abuse. This policy is to be read in conjunction with the Obligations for responding to allegations of child abuse policy.

Policy Review

This policy is reviewed every year, and we undertake to seek feedback from students, parents, careers, staff and volunteers.

Responsibilities

The Board of Damascus College Ltd has overall authority for the implementation of this policy.

Scope

The scope of this policy covers all members of the Damascus College community, including but not limited to Staff and Students.

Definitions

A member of the **Damascus College community** is any person who is associated with Damascus College.

Child: A child or a young person in attendance within the school environment.

Child abuse includes:

- a) any act committed against a child involving:
 - a sexual offence
 - an offence under section 49B (2) of the **Crimes Act 1958** (grooming)
- b) the infliction, on a child, of:
 - physical violence
 - serious emotional or psychological harm
- c) serious neglect of a child ([Ministerial Order No. 870- Child Safe Standards - Managing the risk of child abuse in schools](#))

Child Information Sharing Scheme permits information sharing entities (including schools) to **request** or **disclose** information about any person for the purpose of promoting the wellbeing or safety of a child or group of children.

Child safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of - abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse. ([Ministerial Order No. 870 - Child Safe Standards - Managing the risk of child abuse in schools.](#))

Child neglect includes a failure to provide the child with an adequate standard of nutrition, medical care, clothing, shelter or supervision to the extent that the health and physical development of the child is significantly impaired or placed at serious risk. ([PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#))

Child physical abuse: Generally, consists of any non-accidental infliction by any person of physical violence on a child. ([PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#))

Child sexual abuse occurs when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve that child in sexual activity. It can include a wide range of sexual activity and does not always involve physical contact or force. ([PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#))

Emotional child abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats, or by witnessing family violence. ([PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#))

Grooming is predatory conduct engaged in to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later date. It can include communication and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent/carer. ([PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#))

Mandatory Reporting: The legal requirement under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)* to make a report to the designated authority in order to protect children from harm relating to physical and sexual abuse. The Principal, teachers, medical practitioners, nurses, student counsellors and those in religious ministry are mandatory reporters under this Act. ([PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#))

PROTECT Protocol is a joint, cross-sectoral protocol for use in Victorian schools. This website and protocol provide advice and resources to schools and mandated reporters on the actions to be taken to respond to suspicions or allegations of child abuse. A range of materials are available for all schools.

Reasonable Belief: When school staff, or other mandated person/s, are concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person, they must assess that concern to determine if a report should be made to the relevant agency. This process of considering all relevant information and observations is known as forming a 'reasonable belief'. A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumour or speculation. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. ([PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#))

Reportable Conduct Scheme: was created under the *Child Wellbeing, and Safety Act 2005 (Vic.)* and requires schools to notify the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) if an allegation of reportable conduct (a reportable allegation) is made against one of their employees.

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a) a campus of the school
- b) online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- c) other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events). (Ministerial Order No. 870- Child Safe Standards -Managing the risk of child abuse in schools)

School staff means an individual working in a school environment who is:

- a) directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
- b) a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)
- c) a minister of religion (Ministerial Order No. 870- Child Safe Standards -Managing the risk of child abuse in schools.)

Policy Statement

The Board requires that the child safety policy and practices of Damascus College embed a culture of child safety through leadership, ensure the proactive management of child abuse risks and/or allegations of abuse, provide for child participation and empowerment and engage the whole school community in a proactive approach to the care, wellbeing and protection of children and young people.

The Board is committed to ensuring that child abuse reporting procedures are age-appropriate, simple and accessible for all children, young people and members of school communities.

Damascus College will take all student contributions seriously, and information about these topics will be covered through various age-appropriate care initiatives and curriculum delivery.

The Board is responsible for ensuring Damascus College has human resources practices that provide for child safety in the recruitment, selection, induction, and ongoing suitability of staff. Damascus College must implement procedures for verifying the Working with Children Check (WWCC) status of all staff/visitors, who may have direct unsupervised contact with students, to ensure that students remain safe in all school environments both internal and external to the school grounds.

A system of assurance through which risks of child abuse, and actions taken to reduce or remove these risks (risk controls), are recorded is to be in place in Damascus College.



The system is also used by the Board and sub-committees to monitor risk controls and to evaluate their overall effectiveness regularly.

Commitment to Child Safety

Damascus College Commitment Statement to Child Safety

All children and young people have the right to feel safe and be safe and deserve, as a fundamental right, safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect.. The wellbeing of children and young people in the care of Damascus College will always be the first priority with a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse. Damascus College works to create a child-safe and child-friendly environment where children and young people are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for the student's own safety and where children and young people are respected, and their voices are heard. There is particular attention paid to the most vulnerable children and young people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children and young people with a disability.

Damascus College works in partnership with families and the community to ensure that they are engaged in decision-making processes, particularly those that have an impact on child safety and protection, in accordance with its obligations as the governing authority as described in Ministerial Order No 870: Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools (MO 870).

All children and young people have the right to a thorough and systematic education in all aspects of personal safety, in partnership with their parents/guardians/caregivers.

All adults at Damascus College, including teaching and non-teaching staff, clergy, volunteers, contractors, Board directors and sub-committee members, have a responsibility to care for children and young people, to promote their wellbeing and to protect them from any kind of harm or abuse.

All persons involved in situations where harm is suspected or disclosed will be treated with sensitivity, dignity, and respect.

Staff, clergy, volunteers, contractors, parents/carers, students, Board directors and sub-committee members, should feel free to raise concerns about child safety, knowing these will be taken seriously.

Damascus College commitment to students

Damascus commits to:

- a) the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people enrolled in the College

- b) providing children and young people with positive and nurturing experiences
- c) listening to children and young people and empowering them by taking student views seriously and addressing any concerns that are raised
- d) taking action to ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse or harm
- e) teaching children and young people the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing
- f) seeking input and feedback from students regarding the creation of a safe College environment.

Damascus commitment to and with parents and carers

Damascus commits to:

- a) communicating honestly and openly with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children
- b) engaging with, and listening to, the views of parents and carers about College child-safety practice, policies and procedures
- c) transparency in College decision-making with parents and carers where it will not compromise the safety of children or young people
- d) acknowledging the cultural diversity of students and families, and being sensitive to how this may impact on student safety issues
- e) Continuously reviewing and improving College systems to protect children and young people from abuse.

College commitment to College staff (College employees, volunteers, contractors)

Damascus commits to:

- a) Providing all staff with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles. This will include regular and appropriate learning opportunities
- b) Providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm policy and procedures in relation to child safety and young people's protection and wellbeing. This will include annual training in the principles and intent of the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct, and staff responsibilities to report concerns
- c) listening to all concerns voiced by staff, volunteers, and contractors about keeping children and young people safe from harm
- d) Providing opportunities for College employees, volunteers, contractors to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.



1. Procedures and responsibilities

Responsibilities for Child Safety

These procedures are to be read in conjunction with the Damascus College Limited Child Safe Governance Policy.

Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained, with information being provided only to those who have a right or a need to be informed, either legally or pastorally.

Responsibilities

The Damascus College Limited Board

- 1) Promotes a culture of child safety, inclusion, and recognition of diversity, in accordance with MO 870 and its obligations as the governing authority of Damascus College Limited
- 2) Sets Child Safety as a standing item on the Board agenda
- 3) Through its policies, procedures and actions seeks to ensure the inclusion of children of diverse backgrounds and abilities
- 4) Requires that the Principal and Leadership Team of the College develop strategies to embed a culture of child safety, allocate roles and responsibilities for achieving the strategies and inform the school community about the strategies and allocated roles and responsibilities
- 5) Periodically reviews the effectiveness of the child safe policies and strategies that the Board developed for implementation and, if considered appropriate, revises those strategies
- 6) Requires the Principal and Leadership Team to review the effectiveness of the child safe strategies they have put into practice and ensure they remain current and appropriate
- 7) Requires the Principal and Leadership Team to implement the Damascus College Child Safe Schools Policy, inform the school community about the policy and make the policy available on the school website
- 8) Obliges the Principal and Leadership Team to implement and make publicly available the ***Damascus College Safeguarding Children and Young People: Code of Conduct***
- 9) Seeks evidence from the Principal and Leadership Team regarding the implementation of practices for a child safe environment in school staff selection and supervision

- 10) Reviews periodically employment, screening and supervision policies and procedures
- 11) Requires that the Principal and Leadership Team, implement the ***Damascus College Safeguarding Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures***
- 12) Requires that the Principal and Leadership team implement the ***Damascus College Child Safe Risk Management and Process Policy and Procedures***
- 13) At least annually, undertakes training about the Board's individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse, current and emerging child abuse risks in the school environment and effective practice in child safety
- 14) Expects the Principal and Leadership Team to implement appropriately approved child safe school curriculum frameworks
- 15) Expects the Principal and Leadership Team to implement the curriculum that includes the importance of inclusive and respected sexuality.

The Principal as Executive Officer and College Leader Responsibilities

- 1) Promotes a culture of child safety in the school
- 2) Ensures the College takes specific actions to protect children in line with MO 870 and other legal responsibilities
- 3) Reports to Board on the implementation of the child safety standards at the College in accordance with the obligations of the governing authority under MO 870
- 4) Takes reasonable action to ensure the inclusion of children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with disabilities.
- 5) Allocates roles and responsibilities for achieving the child safe strategies
- 6) Informs the school community about the strategies, and allocated roles and responsibilities
- 7) Ensures the College provides public access to the following documents ideally on the school's website:
 - child safety policies and procedures
 - roles and responsibilities in relation to child safety
 - a copy of the current Child Safety Code of Conduct
 - the procedure for reporting allegations of suspected child abuse so that it is accessible to children and young people, College staff, and the wider community
 - information about how a child or young person or adult can disclose abuse or report any concerns about child safety
 - information about the supports available to those who disclose abuse or concerns

- the Damascus College Concerns and Complaints Policy
 - the Damascus College Whistleblower Protection Policy and Procedures
- 8) Refines and implements strategies to embed a culture of child safety across the College
 - 9) Implements and monitors the effectiveness of child safe strategies put into practice
 - 10) Ensures advertising, recruitment, employment, and induction processes for staff are consistent with CECV guidelines including position descriptions that outline responsibilities and expectations for child safety
 - 11) Supervises the effectiveness of the College's use of the Damascus College Safeguarding Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
 - 12) Monitors and reviews the effectiveness of the risk management strategies to mitigate the risk of child abuse
 - 13) Ensures adequate resources are provided for training for all College personnel to understand their individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse, current and emerging child abuse risks in the College and effective practices in child safety standards
 - 14) Makes available the resources to implement the appropriately approved child safe curriculum frameworks.
 - 15) Examines the training/professional learning register for Directors, Board sub-committee members and all employees to ensure all have completed the required child safety training
 - 16) Ensures appropriate processes are in place for Board directors, sub-committee members and employees to undertake an annual review in relation to their capability and skills for child safety
 - 17) Makes sure that advertising and employment processes for staff and volunteers are consistent with CECV guidelines including position descriptions that outline responsibilities and expectations for child safety
 - 18) Enables student input opportunities about various child safety issues
 - 19) Manages the child safety training register for staff, contractors, volunteers, clergy, and Board Directors and Sub-Committee members.
 - 20) Ensures child safety is a standing item for the Board's Agenda
 - 21) Implements processes to identify specific student characteristics that may impact on child safety for individual students
 - 22) Provides regular updates on child safety in the school newsletter and supplies child safety materials to be displayed in appropriate forums and areas
 - 23) Supports, encourages, and enables school staff, families and children and

- young people to understand, identify, discuss, and report child safety concerns
- 24) Supports or assists children and young people who disclose child abuse or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse
 - 25) Puts in place a system for making, securing, and retaining records of compliance with child safety standards
 - 26) Reports to police and the Commission of Children and Young People incidents that breach standards.

THE WELLBEING SUB-COMMITTEES (in conjunction with the Principal)

Responsibilities

- 1) Supports the operations of the Board through monitoring the College in relation to child safeguarding and compliance with MO 870
- 2) Support the Principal and Leadership Team to promotes a culture of safeguarding across the College
- 3) Liaises with relevant committees to deepen understanding of legislation and the operation of College in a Child Safe environment
- 4) Reviews policy, procedures, and school practices in light of Damascus College's commitment to ensure the inclusion of children and young people of diverse backgrounds and abilities
- 5) Advises the Board in developing strategies to embed a culture of child safety at schools
- 6) Informs the Board on materials that have been designed to support these strategies.
- 7) Advises the Board by recommending revisions to child safe strategies subsequent to their periodic review
- 8) Liaises with the Board in monitoring the Damascus College Safeguarding Children and Young People: Code of Conduct.
- 9) Liaises with the Board in monitoring and reviewing the Damascus College Safeguarding Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedure
- 10) Assists the Child Protection Officer in identifying appropriate training for all personnel to understand their individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse, current and emerging child abuse risks in the College and what constitutes effective practice in child safety standards
- 11) Provides advice for endorsement and appropriate child safe curriculum frameworks to the Board.

Finance Facility and Risk Sub- Committee (in conjunction with the Principal) Responsibilities

- 12) Supports the operations of the Board through monitoring the College in relation to child safeguarding and compliance with MO 870
- 13) Liaises with the Board in monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of risk management strategies used by the College to mitigate the risk of child abuse
- 14) Identifies and monitors areas of risk associated with wellbeing and safeguarding and escalates immediately to the Principal any risks associated with child safety that require mitigation
- 15) Reviews and updates the Child Safe Risk Register annually and as new risks emerge
- 16) Review and endorse a cyclic review of all safeguarding policies and a process for upgrading and updating policies in relation to feedback and reports from schools as well as to changes in legislation

Child Protection Officer

The Child Protection Officer assists the Principal to ensure the safety of all students and young people. A role description is available on the College website and in the staff and parent handbooks. The Child Protection Officer works in collaboration with those responsible for Risk Management within the College in identifying and mitigating risks in child safety. The Child Protection Officer with the Principal is responsible for informing staff, students and College community on policies, procedures and practices and identifying professional learning.

College Staff:

- 1) Ensure children and young people are treated with dignity and respect, acting with propriety, providing a duty of care, and protecting children and young people in their care
- 2) Assist children and young people to develop positive, responsible and caring attitudes and behaviours which recognise the rights of all people to be safe and free from abuse
- 3) Provide a physically and psychologically safe environment where the wellbeing of children and young people is nurtured
- 4) Undertake regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to child safety and the wellbeing of children and young people

- 5) Undertake and implement professional learning such as the principle of inclusion, resilience, behaviour management, healthy and respectful relations, critical incidents, pastoral care and child abuse awareness and preventions
- 6) Ensure curriculum design integrates appropriate knowledge and skills to enhance students' understanding of being safe and engages them in curriculum design
- 7) Implement teaching and learning strategies that acknowledge and support student empowerment and participation and inclusion
- 8) Follow the legislative and internal College processes if, in the course of their work, they form a reasonable belief that a child or young person has been or is being abused or neglected
- 9) Follow the step-by-step guide to making a report as outlined in [PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#)
- 10) Follow the Damascus College Child Safety Policies and Procedures and the Damascus College Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct
- 11) Remain familiar with the relevant laws, the code of conduct, and policies and procedures in relation to child protection and comply with all requirements.

Volunteers and Contractors:

- 1) Participate in College requirements for induction and ongoing training in child safety
- 2) Be familiar with the relevant laws, the code of conduct, and policies and procedures in relation to child protection and comply with College requirements
- 3) Ensure students are treated with dignity and respect
- 4) Follow Damascus College policies and procedures including those for signing-in and out
- 12) Follow the Damascus College Damascus College Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct
- 5) Report immediately any concerns or issues regarding child safety to the Principal or child protection officer

The Principal, Child Protection Officer or staff member will follow the step-by-step guide to making a report as outlined in [PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#) or address the matter as outline in [PROTECT Identifying and responding to Student Sexual Offending](#).



Concerned Parent, Family or Community Member

If a parent, family member or Community member is concerned about the safety of a Student of the College, the College Principal, Child Protection Officer, or Assistant Principal Student Wellbeing can assist:

1. To report a concern
2. To talk about something that is worrying a member of the community
3. to provide support for a child or young person or someone else for whom a concern is held

The College takes all allegations of child abuse or threats to child safety seriously.

The College seeks to treat anyone who reports a concern with respect and dignity.

Breach of Policy

Where an **employee** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this Policy Damascus may start the process under clause 13 of the *Victorian Catholic Education Multi Enterprise Agreement 2013* (VCEMEA) for managing employment concerns. This may result in disciplinary consequences.

Where the **Principal** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the concerned party is advised to contact the Manager Safeguarding and Standards for assistance at Catholic Education Ballarat.

Tim O'Farrell

Safeguarding and Standards Manager

E: tofarrell@ceob.edu.au

P: 03 5337 7175

Where any **other member of the College community** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the College is to take appropriate action in accordance with Reporting Obligations, Damascus College Concerns and Complaints Policy and/or to contact the Manager Safeguarding and Standards for assistance.

Legislative Context

Ministerial Order 870. Child Safe Standards

Crimes Act

Mandatory Reporting

Children & Young Persons Act

Associated Documents

Damascus College Vision Statement

Damascus College Child Safe School Policy and Procedures

Damascus College Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct

Damascus College Child Safe Reporting Obligations Procedure



Damascus College Child Safe Risk Management Policy and Procedure