St Mary's Primary School
Hamilton
Child Safe Policy

Developed & Ratified: 2016
By: St Mary’s School Advisory Council
Last review/revision: 2016
Next Review: 2019

Scriptural Context:

St Mary’s Primary School endorses Catholic beliefs and practices and is committed to the protection of children in our care. As a faith community, we nurture and watch over each person in keeping with the gospel values lived by Jesus Christ.

“I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full.” John 10:10

“Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and your right hand delivers me.” Psalm 138:7

Rationale:

This policy was written to demonstrate the strong commitment of the whole school community of St Mary’s Primary School; leaders, staff, volunteers, students, their families, to child safety and to provide an outline of the policies and procedures developed to keep everyone safe from harm, including all forms of abuse.

Commitment to Child Safety:

All students enrolled, and any child visiting, have a right to feel safe and be safe. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we have zero tolerance to child abuse. We aim to create a child safe and child friendly environment where children feel safe and are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety.
Children’s Rights to Safety and Participation:

The staff and volunteers of St Mary’s Primary School encourage students to express their views. We listen to their suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them. We actively encourage all students to openly express their views and feel comfortable about giving voice to the things that are important to them.

We teach students about what they can do if they feel unsafe. We listen to and act on any concerns students, or their parents or carers, raise with us.

Students participate in a number of programs and frameworks to support them in understanding their rights in regards to safety and how to seek help if they need to. Teachers provide learning in this area through Bounce Back! (social emotional learning program), our Religious Education curriculum and involvement in the Life Education program. We also provide opportunities for students as a KidsMatter school and our commitment to a Pastoral Care worker.

Valuing Diversity and Inclusion:

We value and celebrate diversity, especially cultural diversity, and we do not tolerate discriminatory practices. To achieve this we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students and their families
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) and their families
- promote the personal safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability and make them feel welcome and part of all aspects of school life

Recruiting Staff and Volunteers:

St Mary’s will apply the most thorough and rigorous standards in the recruitment and screening of staff and volunteers. We interview and conduct referee checks on all staff and volunteers and require police checks and Working with Children Checks (WWCC) for all staff and volunteers. Our commitment to Child Safety and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements for staff and volunteer positions.

St Mary’s has a policy relating to the selection and induction of staff which explicitly addresses the requirements of the Child Safe Standards.
Supporting Staff and Volunteers:

St Mary’s provides support and supervision to all staff and volunteers so people feel valued, respected, affirmed in their work and fairly treated. We have a Code of Conduct to provide guidance to our staff and volunteers, all of whom receive training on the requirements of the Code.

Reporting a Child Safety Concern or Complaint:

Our school records any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Code of Conduct, and stores the records in accordance with security and privacy requirements. Our complaints and disclosure processes are outlined and detailed in the following policies and procedures:

- Child Safe Policy
- Guidelines and Procedures for Mandatory Reporting of Child Physical and Sexual Abuse
- Communication and Grievance Policy

Jo-Anne Bond, Principal, has been appointed as Child Safety Officer with specific responsibility for responding to any complaints made by staff, volunteers, parents or students in relation to Child Safety.

Risk Management:

Risk management is an approach that minimises the potential for child abuse or harm to occur. Our Risk Management Plan outlines and details all aspects of risk across our whole school environment (on site and off site school activities) with specific activity risk assessments. In addition to our general Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse and harm to our students.

Policy Review:

This policy is reviewed every three years and we undertake to seek feedback from students, parents, carers, staff and volunteers.

What is child abuse?

The child safe standards aim to protect children from abuse in organisations. Under the Act, child abuse includes five categories of abuse as outlined below.¹

While the standards apply specifically to child abuse, organisations should look to promote children’s health and wellbeing in a broader sense.

Physical violence

Physical violence occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from a non-accidental injury or injuries inflicted by another person. Physical violence can be inflicted in many ways, including beating, shaking, burning or use of weapons (such as, belts and paddles).

Possible physical indicators:
- Unexplained bruises
- Burns and/or fractured bones

Possible behavioural indicators:
- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Wearing long sleeved clothes on hot days (to hide bruising or other injury)
- Fear of specific people
- Unexplained absences
- Academic problems

Sexual offences

Sexual offences occur when a person involves the child in sexual activity, or deliberately puts the child in the presence of sexual behaviours that are exploitative or inappropriate to his/her age and development. Child sexual abuse can involve a range of sexual activity including fondling, masturbation, penetration, voyeurism and exhibitionism. It can also include exposure to or exploitation through pornography or prostitution, as well as grooming behaviour.²

Possible physical indicators:
- Presence of sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy
- Vaginal or anal bleeding or discharge

Possible behavioural indicators:
- Displaying sexual behaviour or knowledge that is unusual for the child’s age
- Difficulty sleeping
- Being withdrawn
- Complaining of headaches or stomach pains


• Fear of specific people
• Showing wariness or distrust of adults
• Displaying aggressive behaviour

**Serious emotional or psychological abuse**
Serious emotional or psychological abuse occurs when harm is inflicted on a child through repeated rejection, isolation, or by threats or violence. It can include derogatory name-calling and put-downs, or persistent and deliberate coldness from a person, to the extent where the behaviour of the child is disturbed or their emotional development is at serious risk of being impaired. Serious emotional or psychological abuse could also result from conduct that exploits a child without necessarily being criminal, such as encouraging a child to engage in inappropriate or risky behaviours.
Possible physical indicators:
• Delays in emotional, mental, or even physical development
• Physical signs of self-harming
Possible behavioural indicators:
• Exhibiting low self-esteem
• Exhibiting high anxiety
• Displaying aggressive or demanding behaviour
• Being withdrawn, passive and/or tearful
• Self-harming

**Serious neglect**
Serious neglect is the continued failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention or adequate supervision, to the extent that the child’s health, safety and/or development is, or is likely to be, jeopardised. Serious neglect can also occur if an adult fails to adequately ensure the safety of a child where the child is exposed to extremely dangerous or life threatening situations.
Possible physical indicators:
• Frequent hunger
• Malnutrition
• Poor hygiene
• Inappropriate clothing
Possible behavioural indicators:
• Stealing food
• Staying at school outside of school hours
• Aggressive behaviour
• Misusing alcohol or drugs
• Academic issues

*Call the police on 000 if you have immediate concerns for a child’s safety.*