SIENA COLLEGE
CAMBERWELL
CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY

POLICY TITLE: CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY

DEVELOPED / REVIEWED BY

Deputy Principal Wellbeing and Strategy
Risk and Compliance Manager
Human Resources Manager
Siena College Policy Committee
MACS (Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools)

REVIEW SUMMARY

The purpose of this Policy is to demonstrate the strong commitment of Siena College to the care, safety, and wellbeing of all students, children, young people and young adults attending/visiting our College. It provides an outline of the policies, procedures, actions, and strategies that will be implemented to ensure that a child safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels of the College, to keep students safe from harm, including all forms of abuse in our College environment, on campus, online and in other locations provided by the College.

This Policy considers relevant legislative requirements within the state of Victoria, including the specific requirements of the Child Safe Standards as set out in Ministerial Order No. 1359.

This Policy applies to College staff, including College employees, volunteers, contractors, and clergy. It should be read in conjunction with the following related school policies and procedures:

1. PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to Abuse – Reporting obligations
2. Child Safety Code of Conduct
3. Reportable Conduct Policy

DOCUMENT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

This document was first developed by Deputy Principal Wellbeing and Strategy, Antonella Rosati, Risk and Compliance Manager, Larissa Banks and the Human Resources Manager in May 2022 based on a review and revision of the 2016 Child Safe Policy.

RATIONALE

At Siena College, we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of our College. Our commitment is drawn from and inherent to the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice, and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the gospel (CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety).

> The person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ's teaching: this is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school (The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, n. 9).

The Dominican Ideals are a commitment to truth explored in dialogue, a vibrant preaching of the Gospel, a critical appreciation of culture and cultures, and a love of the beautiful. Our goal in each of our Educational Ministries is to foster these values, together with a spirit of prayer and contemplation, respect for the dignity and uniqueness of each individual, and the pursuit of excellence. (Dominican Education Australia)

DEFINITIONS

child	A child who is under the age of 14 years.
young person	A person from 14 – 17 years of age.
young adult	A person from 18 – 22 years of age.
child abuse	(a) Any act committed against a child involving: (i) a sexual offence (ii) an offence under section 49B (2) of the *Crimes Act 1958* (grooming) (b) The infliction, on a child, of: (i) physical violence (ii) serious emotional or psychological harm (c) Serious neglect of a child
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 child abuse, and responding to suspicions, incidents, disclosures, or allegations of child abuse (Ministerial Order No. 1359)
child neglect	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	Consists of any non-accidental infliction of physical violence on a child by any person (PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools).
child sexual abuse	When a person uses power or authority over a child to involve them 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	When a person engages in predatory conduct 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.) is to protect children from harm relating to physical and sexual abuse. The Principal, registered teachers and early childhood teachers, school counsellors, religious clergy, medical practitioners and nurses at a school are mandatory reporters under this Act (PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools).
reasonable belief – mandatory reporting	When College staff 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).
reasonable belief – reportable conduct scheme	When a person has a reasonable belief that a worker/volunteer has committed reportable conduct or misconduct that may involve reportable conduct. A reasonable belief is more than suspicion and there must be some objective basis for the belief. It does not necessitate proof or require certainty. NOTE: the difference between the reasonable belief definitions under mandatory reporting and the reportable conduct scheme is the category of persons who are required to, or can, form the reasonable belief which forms the basis for a report.
reportable conduct	Five types of reportable conduct are listed in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic.) (as amended by the *Children Legislation Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Act 2017*). These include: 1. sexual offences (against, with or in the presence of a child) 2. sexual misconduct (against, with or in the presence of a child) 3. physical violence (against, with or in the presence of a child) 4. behaviour that is likely to cause significant emotional or psychological harm 5. significant neglect
college environment	Any of the following physical, online, or virtual places used during or outside College hours: • a campus of the College • online or virtual school environments made available or authorized by Siena College for use by a child or student (including email, intranet systems, software, applications, collaboration tools and online services) • other locations provided by the College or through a third-part provider for a child or student to use including, but not limited to, locations used for school camps, approved homestay accommodation, delivery of education and training, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events) (Ministerial Order No. 1359)

college staff	An individual working in the College environment who is: • directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority • a contracted service provider engaged by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) engaged to perform child-related work for Siena College • a minister of religion, a religious leader or an employee or officer of a religious body associated with MACS (Ministerial Order No. 1359)
volunteer	A person who performs work without remuneration or reward for Siena College in the College environment.

PRINCIPLES / GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Catholic schools have a moral, legal, and mission-driven responsibility to create nurturing school environments where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard, and they are safe and feel safe (CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety).

The following principles underpin our commitment to child safety and wellbeing at Siena College:

- All students deserve, as a fundamental right, safety, and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect
- Our 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 wellbeing and protection
- All students have the right to a thorough and systematic education in all aspects of personal safety, in partnership with their parents/guardians/carers
- All adults in our College, including teaching and non-teaching staff, clergy, volunteers, and contractors, have a responsibility to care for children and young people, to positively promote their wellbeing, to identify and mitigate risks related to child safety and wellbeing in the College environment and to protect them from any kind of harm or abuse
- The policies, guidelines, and codes of conduct for the care, wellbeing and protection of students are based on honest, respectful, and trusting relationships between adults and children and young people
- Policies and practices demonstrate compliance with legislative requirements and cooperation with the Church, governments, the police, and human services agencies
- All persons involved in situations where harm is suspected or disclosed must be treated with sensitivity, dignity, and respect
- All members of the College community (including students and their families) are kept informed of child safety and wellbeing matters (where appropriate) and are involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing
- Staff, clergy, volunteers, contractors, parents, and students should feel free to raise concerns about child safety and wellbeing, knowing these will be taken seriously by College leadership
- Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained, with information being provided to those who have a right or a need to be informed, either legally (including under legislated information sharing schemes being Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) or Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS)) or pastorally

POLICY COMMITMENTS

All students enrolled at Siena College have the right to feel safe and be safe. The safety and wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we do not and will not tolerate child abuse. We aim to create a child-safe and child-friendly environment where children are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety. There is particular attention paid to the most vulnerable children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with a disability, children who are unable to live at home, international students, and LGBTIQ+ students.

Our commitment to our students

- We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all children, young people and young adults enrolled in our College
- We commit to providing children, young people, and young adults with positive and nurturing experiences
- We commit to listening to children, young people, and young adults and empowering them by ensuring that they understand their rights (including to safety, information, and participation), and by taking their views seriously and addressing any concerns that they raise with us
- We commit to taking action to ensure that children, young people, and young adults are protected from abuse or harm
- We commit to ensuring that the needs of all children, young people, and young adults enrolled in our College are met, including those who are most vulnerable
- We commit to actively supporting all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights
- We commit to recognising the importance of friendships and to encouraging support from peers, to help children, young people, and young adults feel safe and less isolated
- We commit to developing a culture that facilitates and provides opportunities for children, young people, and young adult participation, and that strengthens the confidence and engagement of children, young people and young adults by being responsive to their input
- We commit to teaching children, young people, and young adults the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing
- We commit to seeking input and feedback from students regarding the creation of a safe school environment

Our commitment to parents, guardians, and carers

- We commit to communicating honestly and openly with parents, guardians and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children
- We commit to engaging with, and listening to, the views of parents, guardians and carers about our child safety and wellbeing practice, policies, and procedures
- We commit to transparency in our decision-making with parents, guardians, and carers where it will not compromise the safety of children, young people or young adults
- We commit to open engagement and communication with parents, guardians and carers about our child safe approach and our operations and governance related to child safety and wellbeing
- We commit to ensuring that relevant information relating to child safety and wellbeing is accessible to parents, guardians, and carers

- We commit to acknowledging the cultural diversity of students and families and being sensitive to how this may impact on student safety issues
- We commit to continuously reviewing and improving our systems to protect children from abuse

Our commitment to our College staff (College employees, volunteers, contractors, and clergy)

- We commit to providing all Siena College staff with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles, and to ensure that staff are attuned to signs of harm and can facilitate child-friendly ways for children, young people, and young adults to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns. This will include regular and appropriate learning opportunities
- We commit to providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm policy and procedures in relation to child safety and wellbeing, and young people's protection and wellbeing. This will include annual training in the principles and intent of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct, and staff responsibilities to report concerns
- We commit to listening to all concerns voiced by Siena College staff, clergy, volunteers, and contractors about keeping children, young people, and young adults safe from harm
- We commit to providing opportunities for Siena College employees, volunteers, contractors, and clergy to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child, young person, or young adult

PROCEDURES

Our College creates records relevant to any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and maintains and disposes of those records in accordance with security and privacy requirements and Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards (including minimum retention periods). Our school complies with legal obligations that relate to managing the risk of child abuse under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.), the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.), the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic.) and the recommendations of the Betrayal of Trust report.

Child protection reporting obligations fall under separate pieces of legislation with differing reporting requirements.

Our school's PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to Abuse – Reporting Obligations updated on June 2022, sets out the actions required under the relevant legislation when there is a reasonable belief that a child at our school is in need of protection or a criminal offence has been committed, and provides guidance and procedures on how to make a report.

Our policy assists staff, volunteers, and families to:

- identify the indicators of a child, young person, or young adult who may need protection
- understand how a reasonable belief is formed under the reportable conduct scheme as well as mandatory reporting
- make a report of a child, young person or young adult who may need protection
- comply with mandatory reporting obligations under child protection law, and their legal obligations relating to child abuse and grooming under criminal law
- understand and comply with information sharing and recordkeeping obligations

- comply with reporting obligations under the reportable conduct scheme including obligations to report and investigate allegations of reportable conduct

Our College has also established additional internal procedures and processes to help ensure that appropriate action is taken to prevent, identify and respond to concerns about the wellbeing and/or safety of a student.

Our College is a prescribed Information Sharing Entity (ISE) meaning that, where legislated requirements are met, it can share confidential information with other ISEs to promote child wellbeing or safety under the CISS or FVISS.

At Siena College, if any member of our College community has concerns for a child's safety they need to discuss, they can notify the school Principal, the Deputy Principal Wellbeing and Strategy or the College Counsellors.

If the Principal or Deputy Principal Wellbeing and Strategy are not available, then it should be discussed with a member of the College leadership team. Alternatively, any member of the school community may report directly to the responsible authority.

The staff member, supported by the Principal or Deputy Principal Wellbeing and Strategy will follow the step-by-step guide to making a report as outlined in the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse.

Students impacted by a child abuse or child safety matter will be provided with support to assist them feel safe at school and develop protective factors. Supports will be tailored to each individual student and circumstance. Supports provided to students at the College may include:

- Regularly communicating with the student or students and their parents/guardians/carers where appropriate
- Convening a Student Support Group of College wellbeing staff and teachers to plan, support and monitor affected students
- Developing Student Support Plans for students impacted by the incident to ensure appropriate levels of care and support are provided
- Access to counselling
- Referrals to external services such as family violence services, Centres Against Sexual Assault (CASA) or headspace

Where external authorities are investigating a report of abuse or risk of abuse, it is the role of the Principal to ensure students are supported throughout interviews at the College.

Screening and recruitment of College staff

Siena College will apply thorough and rigorous screening processes in the recruitment of employees and volunteers involved in child-connected work. Our commitment to child safety and wellbeing and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements for such employee, contractor and volunteer positions, and all applicants are provided with copies of the school's Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct, Staff and Student Professional Boundaries, Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and the Mandatory Reporting Policy.

Each job description for staff involved in child-connected work has a clear statement that sets out the requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety and wellbeing for those in that role and the occupant's essential qualifications, experience, and attributes in relation to child safety and wellbeing.

When recruiting and selecting employees, contractors and volunteers involved in child-connected work, we ensure that we gather, verify, and record the following information about any person we propose to engage:

- confirm the applicant's Working with Children Check and National Police Check status and/or professional registration (as relevant)
- obtain proof of personal identity and any essential or relevant professional or other qualifications
- verify the applicant's history of work involving children
- obtain references that address the applicant's suitability for the job and working with children

We will also ensure that appropriate supervision or support arrangements are in place in relation to the induction of new College staff into the school's policies, codes, practices, and procedures governing child safety and wellbeing and child-connected work.

We have procedures and processes for monitoring and assessing the continuing suitability of College staff and volunteers to work with children, including regular reviews of the status of Working with Children Checks and staff professional registration requirements such as Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration.

Siena College implements the following CECV guidelines:

- *Guidelines on the Employment of Staff in Catholic Schools*
- *Guidelines on the Engagement of Volunteers in Catholic Schools*
- *Guidelines on the Engagement of Contractors in Catholic Schools*
- *NDIS/External Providers: Guidelines for Schools*

Child safety and wellbeing – education and training for College staff

Siena College provides employees, volunteers, and clergy with regular and appropriate opportunities to develop their knowledge of openness to and ability to address child safety and wellbeing matters. This includes induction, ongoing training, and professional learning to ensure that everyone understands their professional and legal obligations and responsibilities, and the procedures for reporting suspicion of child abuse and neglect.

Upon commencement and then at least annually, our professional learning and training addresses:

- staff's individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse
- preventing, identifying, and mitigating child abuse risks in the College environment without compromising a child or student's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities
- the reportable conduct scheme
- our current child safety standards (including this Policy, the Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct and any other policies and procedures relating to child safety and wellbeing, including in relation to managing complaints and concerns related to child abuse)
- guidance on recognizing indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students

- guidance on responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- guidance on how to build culturally safe environments for children and students
- guidance on their information sharing and recordkeeping obligations, including under the Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards

Diversity and equity – strategies and actions

At Siena College, we are committed to ensuring that equity is upheld, and that diverse needs are respected in policy and practice. We aim to ensure that:

- all College staff and volunteers understand the diverse circumstances of children and students
- our College provides support and responds to vulnerable children and students
- children, students, staff, volunteers, and the school community have access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible, and easy to understand
- the College pays particular attention to the needs of students with disability, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students who are unable to live at home, international students, and LGBTIQ+ students
- the College pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal students and provides and promotes a culturally safe environment for them

  - *Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne – Welcoming Each Other: Guidelines for Interfaith Education in the Schools of the Archdiocese of Melbourne*
  - *Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan*
  - *CECV – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives*
  - *CECV – Assessing and Intervening with Impact*
  - *CECV – Guidelines for Supporting New Arrivals and Refugees*
  - *CECV – Intervention Framework*
  - *CECV – Parent Guide to Program Support Groups*
  - *CECV – Personal Care Support in Schools*
  - *CECV – Positive Behaviour Guidelines*
  - *Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM) – Horizons of Hope – Vision, Context, Strategy, Practice*
  - *CEM – Identity and Growth: A perspective for Catholic schools*
  - *MACS – Religious Education Curriculum*
  - *National Catholic Education Commission – Framework for Student Faith Formation in Catholic Schools*
  - *Victorian Curriculum F–10*
  - *Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET) Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment*
  - *Victorian DET – Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships, incorporating a Catholic context*

Family engagement – strategies and actions

Siena College ensures that families, carers, and other members of the College community are informed about relevant child safety and wellbeing matters and are involved in the promotion of child safety and wellbeing at the College. We aim to ensure that:

- families participate in decisions relating to child safety and wellbeing which affect their child

- we engage and openly communicate with families, carers, and other members of the College community about our child safe approach
- all members of the College community have access to information relating to child safety and wellbeing
- families, carers, and other members of the College community can provide input into the development and review of the College child safety and wellbeing policies and practices
- families, carers, and other members of the school community are informed about the operations and governance of the College in relation to child safety and wellbeing
- families are invited to contact members of the College leadership team, Heads of House teachers and all staff about any concerns

Risk management

At Siena College, we are committed to proactively and systematically identifying and assessing risks to student safety across our whole school environment and reducing or eliminating (where possible) all potential sources of harm. We document, implement, monitor, and annually review our risks and risk management strategies for child safety and wellbeing, evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of our risk controls and ensure that the strategies change as needed and as new risks arise.

Child safety risks are identified in Siena College's Child Protection Risk Register. These risks take into account the nature of the College environment, the activities conducted at the College and outside of the College, including the provision of services by contractors and outside organisations and the characteristics and needs of all children and students present in those environments. The overall effectiveness of risk controls is measured against each identified risk. Each control is allocated to a responsible individual who is required to confirm whether the control has been effectively carried out. Complispace Assurance (Risk Management System) is used to systematically review and manage child safety risks. Furthermore, the Siena College Child Safety Committee is a forum where child safety risks are discussed.

RESPONSIBILITY

Everyone employed or volunteering at Siena College has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure a child safe culture in which the wellbeing and safety of all students is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make (CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety).

The school has allocated roles and responsibilities for child safety and wellbeing as follows:

Elizabeth Hanney – Principal

Antonella Rosati – Deputy Principal Wellbeing & Strategy

Director of Students

Heads of House (4)

College Counsellors

All Staff

Guide to responsibilities of school leadership

The Principal, the College Board and school leaders at Siena College recognise their responsibility to ensure the development of preventative and proactive strategies that promote a culture of openness, awareness of and shared responsibility for child safety and wellbeing. Responsibilities include:

- creating an environment for children, young people, and young adults to be safe and to feel safe
- upholding high principles and standards for all staff, clergy, volunteers, and contractors
- promoting models of behaviour between adults and children, young people, and young adults based on mutual respect and consideration
- ensuring thorough and rigorous practices are applied in the recruitment, screening and ongoing professional learning of staff and volunteers
- ensuring that College personnel have regular and appropriate learning to develop their knowledge of openness to and ability to prevent, identify and address child safety and wellbeing matters
- ensuring that the College has in place appropriate risk management strategies and practices that focus on preventing, identifying, and mitigating risks related to child safety and wellbeing in the College environment
- providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm legislative obligations, policy, and procedures in relation to children, young people, and young adult's protection and wellbeing
- ensuring the College meets the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in Ministerial Order No. 1359
- ensuring the College takes specific action to protect children from abuse in line with the three new criminal offences introduced under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.) and in line with PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools
- ensuring the College understands and reports all matters that may constitute reportable conduct under the Reportable Conduct Scheme and in accordance with the College Reportable Conduct Policy
- sharing information under legislated information sharing schemes (CISS and FVISS) in accordance with the College prescribed role as an ISE
- ensuring that the College monitors and reviews the risks related to child safety and wellbeing, including evaluating the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls, on an annual basis

Guide to responsibilities of College staff

Responsibilities of College staff (College employees, contractors, and clergy) and volunteers include:

- treating children, young people, and young adults with dignity and respect, acting with propriety, providing a duty of care, and protecting children, young people, and young adults in their care
- following the legislative and internal College policies, procedures, and processes in the course of their work, if they form a reasonable belief that a child, young person, or young adult has been or is being abused or neglected
- providing a physically and psychologically safe environment where the wellbeing of children, young people, and young adults is nurtured
- undertaking regular training and education to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to child safety, and the wellbeing of children, young people, and young adults, including ways to prevent, identify and mitigate risks relating to child safety and wellbeing
- assisting children, young people, and young adults to develop positive, responsible, and caring attitudes and behaviours which recognise the rights of all people to be safe and free from abuse

- following the College Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct
- where risks of child abuse are identified, ensuring that action is taken to mitigate against those risks and that risks and actions are appropriately recorded

Organisational arrangements

The Principal has the overall leadership role in monitoring and responding to the policy, procedures and practices for child safety and wellbeing in Siena College in accordance with this Policy.

We have appointed a Deputy Principal Wellbeing and Strategy who is also the DEA (Dominican Education Australia) Safeguarding representative for the College.

- The Child Safety Committee and Wellbeing Team assist the Principal
- The Child Safety and Wellbeing Team, work in preventing, identifying, and mitigating risks in child safety and wellbeing
- The Child Safety and Wellbeing Team also support the Principal to monitor implementation of College policies, procedures and practices, to monitor and review the risks associated with child safety and wellbeing (including identification of professional learning)

Siena College's website, portal and newsletter will provide information to keep parents and carers informed of child safety and wellbeing commitments, procedures, and arrangements.

Expectation of our College staff and volunteers – Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct

At Siena College we expect College employees, volunteers, contractors, and clergy to proactively ensure the safety and wellbeing of students, to identify concerns about child safety and wellbeing and to take appropriate action if there are concerns about the safety and wellbeing of any child at the school. All College staff must remain familiar with the relevant laws, the code of conduct, and policies and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements. We have developed the Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct, which recognises the critical role that College staff play in protecting the students in our care and establishes clear expectations of College employees, volunteers, contractors, and clergy for appropriate behaviour with children to safeguard them against abuse and/or neglect.

Our Code also protects College staff and volunteers through clarification of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. This is also elaborated on in the Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Guidelines.

Student safety and participation

At Siena College 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 and enable them to understand, identify, discuss, and report their concerns. We listen to and act on any concerns students, or their parents or carers, raise with us.

The curriculum design integrates appropriate knowledge and skills to enhance students' understanding of being safe, as well as their understanding of their rights to safety, information, and participation. Teaching and learning strategies that acknowledge and support student agency and voice are implemented. We

ensure that students are offered access to sexual abuse prevention programs and to relevant related information in an age-appropriate way.

We have developed appropriate education about:

- standards of behaviour for students attending our College
- healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality)
- resilience
- child abuse awareness and prevention

We have also developed curriculum planning documents that detail the strategies and actions the College takes to implement its obligations to ensure that:

- children and students are informed about all their rights, including to safety, information, and participation
- the importance of friendship is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, to help children and students feel safe and be less isolated
- staff and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children and students to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns
- we have strategies in place to develop a culture that facilitates participation and is responsive to the input of children and students
- we provide opportunities for children and students to participate and which are responsive to their contributions to strengthen confidence and engagement
- students are offered access to sexual abuse prevention programs and to relevant information in an age-appropriate way
- students may participate in SRC forums
- student feedback is sought through surveys

RELATED LEGISLATION

- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.)
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic.)
- *Worker Screening Act 2020* (Vic.)
- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic.)
- *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017* (Vic.)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic.)
- *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth)
- *Public Records Act 1973* (Vic)
- *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.) – Three new criminal offences have been introduced under this Act:

1. Failure to disclose offence: Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 has an obligation to report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence.

2. Failure to protect offence: This offence will apply where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation. A person in a position of

authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

3. Grooming offence: This offence targets predatory conduct designed to facilitate later sexual activity with a child. Grooming can be conducted in person or online, for example via interaction through social media, web forums and emails.

RELATED SIENA COLLEGE POLICIES

- Mandatory Reporting Policy June 2022
- Reportable Conduct Policy June 2022
- School Student Behaviour Policy June 2022
- School Complaints Handling Policy June 2022

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Child Safe Standards: MACS School Action List
- Protect: Identifying and Responding to Abuse Reporting Obligations
- Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse
- Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct June 2022
- Staff and Student Professional Boundaries June 2022

NEXT REVIEW

August 2025

POLICY LOCATION

https://sienacentral.siena.vic.edu.au/send.php?id=13971