



# CHILD SAFETY POLICY

## St Monica's Primary School

### Reportable Conduct Scheme

July 2022

St Monica's Primary School is a school which operates with the consent of the Catholic Bishop of Sandhurst and is owned, operated and governed by Catholic Education Sandhurst Limited (CES Ltd).

## 1. Introduction

St Monica's Primary School is committed to providing a safe environment for all students and young people and take active steps to protect them against neglect and abuse. Our school maintains a comprehensive suite of child safety policies and strategies and acknowledges its responsibility to report any misconduct by an employee, volunteer or contractor to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP).

From 1 July 2017, the Victorian Government legislated the introduction of a Reportable Conduct Scheme (RCS) to improve how organisations, including schools, respond to allegations of child abuse and child-related misconduct by employees, volunteers and contractors.

## 2. Purpose

The CCYP is focused on employee, volunteer and contractor conduct and how organisations investigate and respond to suspected child abuse. The RCS aims to improve organisational responses to suspected child abuse and to facilitate the identification of individuals who pose a risk of harm to children, but do not have a criminal record.

The CES Ltd Chief Executive Officer must ensure that St Monica's Primary School maintains systems that:

- prevent reportable conduct by employees of the school within the course of their employment
- ensure reportable allegations are made to the Principal and then notified to the CES Ltd Chief Executive Officer, or if the reportable allegation concerns the Principal made directly to the CES Ltd Chief Executive Officer via the CES Ltd Safeguarding Team
- ensure reportable allegations that involve employees are notified to the CCYP and responded to in accordance with the requirements of the RCS.

### 3. Definitions

<b>Child</b>	Means a child or young person who is under the age of 18 years.
<b>Employee</b>	For the purposes of the <i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005</i> (Vic.), employee is defined as a person aged 18 years or over who is either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● employed by the school whether or not that person is employed in connection with any work or activities of the school that relate to children</li> <li>● engaged by the school to provide services, including as a volunteer, contractor, office holder or officer, whether or not the person provides services to children.</li> </ul>
<b>Mandatory Reporting</b>	is a term used to describe the legislative requirement imposed on selected classes of people to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to government authorities. Where a mandated reporter forms a belief on reasonable grounds that a student or young person is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse, they are to report their concerns to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection.
<b>Reportable allegation</b>	means any information that leads a person to form a reasonable belief that an employee has committed either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● reportable conduct, or</li> <li>● misconduct that may involve reportable conduct,</li> </ul> whether or not the conduct or misconduct is alleged to have occurred within the course of the person’s employment.
<b>Reportable conduct</b>	means: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● a sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of a child, whether or not a criminal proceeding in relation to the offence has been commenced or concluded</li> <li>● sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child</li> <li>● physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child</li> <li>● any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child</li> <li>● significant neglect of a child.</li> </ul>

## 4. Scope

This policy applies to all employees of St Monica’s Primary School and requires them to report allegations of reportable conduct to the Principal who must contact the CES Ltd Safeguarding Team. Allegations that concern the Principal can be referred to a member of the school’s Leadership Team, or directly to the CES Ltd Chief Executive Officer via the CES Ltd Safeguarding Team.

## 5. Implementation

The school will ensure the reporting of any reportable allegation made against an employee to the CES Ltd Safeguarding Team.

A reportable allegation is made where a person makes an allegation, based on a reasonable belief, that an employee, volunteer or contractor has committed conduct that *may* involve reportable conduct. This includes where a reportable allegation is made against the school Principal.

**Note: A reasonable belief is more than suspicion. There must be some objective basis for the belief. However, it is not the same as having proof and does not require certainty.**

*For example, a person is likely to have a reasonable belief if they:*

- *observed the conduct themselves*
- *heard directly from a child that the conduct occurred*
- *received information from another credible source (including another person who witnessed the reportable conduct or misconduct).*

St Monica’s Primary School Principal, a member of the Leadership Team, the CES Ltd Safeguarding Team or the CES Ltd Chief Executive Officer does not need to agree with or share the belief that the alleged conduct has occurred. The RCS is an allegations-based scheme. This means that the threshold for notifying the CCYP is low. All allegations must be referred to the CES Ltd Safeguarding Team for advice.

The CES Ltd Safeguarding Team (or a delegate of the CES Ltd Chief Executive Officer) on behalf of the CES Ltd Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the school Principal or, where there is an allegation against a Principal, member of the Leadership Team will then:

- submit a notification to the CCYP within three days of the CES Ltd Chief Executive Officer becoming aware of the reportable allegation
- meet the milestones and reporting requirements to the CCYP under the RCS.

### Reportable conduct includes:

Sexual Offence	Sexual Misconduct	Physical Violence	Behaviour that causes significant Psychological or Emotional Harm	Significant Neglect
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rape or sexual assault</li> <li>● Sexual activity with or in the presence of a child</li> <li>● Grooming or encouraging a child to engage in sexual activity</li> <li>● Offences relating to child abuse material</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Behaviour, physical contact, speech or other communication of a sexual nature</li> <li>● Physical contact without valid reason</li> <li>● Crossing professional boundaries</li> <li>● Voyeurism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hitting, kicking, punching</li> <li>● Pushing, shoving, grabbing, throwing, shaking</li> <li>● Use of an object</li> <li>● Inappropriate restraint, excessive force</li> <li>● Causing a child to believe that force is about to be used (apprehended)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Exposure to violence or threats of violence</li> <li>● Anti-social behavior</li> <li>● Self-destructive behavior</li> <li>● Persistent hostility or rejection</li> <li>● Humiliation or belittling</li> <li>● Scapegoating</li> </ul>	<p>Deprived from the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● clothing or food</li> <li>● medical attention or care</li> <li>● shelter</li> <li>● supervision</li> </ul> <p>Access to drugs or alcohol</p>
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The above examples are not exhaustive and consideration should be given to other conduct which may need to be reported. Any reportable allegation listed above, or not listed above but which may constitute reportable conduct, will need to be immediately reported by the school Principal. An allegation against a school Principal should be referred to another member of the Leadership Team, or directly to the CES Ltd Chief Executive Officer via the CES Ltd Safeguarding Team.

If the alleged conduct is potentially criminal in nature, Victoria Police must also be notified as a first priority and any investigation by Victoria Police will take precedence.

Where the allegation falls under the mandatory reporting domain, the reporting to CCYP is in addition to reporting to Police and DFFH Child Protection.

**Reportable conduct, Mandatory reporting and reporting to VIT**

Reportable conduct allegations as listed above are referred to CCYP.

Any alleged conduct that is regarded to be of a criminal nature is to be dealt with as mandatory reporting and referred to Victoria Police and DFFH according to CES Ltd PROTECT: Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and CES Ltd PROTECT: Responding and Reporting Obligations Procedures.

If the employee against whom an allegation of reportable conduct is made is a registered teacher and the misconduct involves a charge, conviction or finding of guilt of a sexual offence, the school must notify the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) immediately under conduct that is reportable to the VIT.

**Responsibilities of the School Principal**

**Note:** Principals must comply with the PROTECT reporting obligations, which are in addition to

*the reporting requirements to the CCYP under the RCS.*

The CES Ltd Chief Executive Officer is ultimately responsible for notification of any reportable allegation to the CCYP and for ensuring that a reportable allegation is investigated.

It is the responsibility of the school Principal (or for allegations against a Principal, the relevant leader) to ensure that all reportable allegations are taken seriously and referred to the CES Ltd Safeguarding Team as soon as they become aware of them, and to follow the advice and guidance of the CES Ltd Safeguarding Team (as authorised by the CES Ltd Chief Executive Officer) to respond appropriately. This will usually include conducting an investigation or facilitating the conduct of an investigation.

**Note:** St Monica's Primary School staff members are not required to make a report directly to the CCYP; this is the responsibility of the CES Ltd Safeguarding Team (or other person authorised by CES Ltd Chief Executive Officer) on behalf of the CES Ltd Chief Executive Officer. However, any person with a concern (including a staff member who wishes to remain anonymous, students, parents and/or other members of the community) may notify the CCYP directly of a reportable allegation via a community notification on the website.

*In the event of a reportable allegation against the school Principal, this must be reported to another member of the Leadership Team or directly to the CES Ltd Chief Executive Officer via the CES Ltd Safeguarding Team.*

*School Principals (and other leaders as appropriate) must also facilitate any requests for information or documentation from CES Ltd, Victoria Police or a regulator in the course of an investigation to ensure compliance with the RCS and the law.*

## **Reporting to CCYP**

Upon becoming aware of a reportable allegation against an employee, the Principal, member of the Leadership Team must contact the CES Ltd Safeguarding Team as soon as practicable in order to ensure that the following milestones and reporting requirements to the CCYP are met:

Within three business days	Within 30 calendar days	Advice on investigation	Outcomes of investigation	Additional documents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● School contact details</li> <li>● Name of the employee, volunteer or contractor</li> <li>● Their date of birth</li> <li>● Initial advice on the nature of the allegation</li> <li>● Any police report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Details of the investigation</li> <li>● Details of the school's response</li> <li>● Details regarding disciplinary or other action proposed</li> <li>● Any written response from the employee, volunteer or contractor regarding the allegation, proposed disciplinary or other action</li> </ul>	<p>As soon as is practicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● name of the investigator</li> <li>● their contact details</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Copies of the investigation findings</li> <li>● Details regarding disciplinary or other action proposed</li> <li>● Reasons for taking or not taking action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promptly providing any further information to the CCYP as requested</li> </ul>

### Investigating reportable allegations

St Monica's Primary School will ensure procedural fairness throughout the entire investigation process.

**Note:** *It is anticipated that any investigations will be undertaken with guidance from CES Ltd Safeguarding Team this will at times include ensuring investigations are undertaken by a suitably qualified, third party engaged in consultation with CES Ltd Safeguarding Team.*

The school Principal will ensure that for current employees the process set out in clause 13 of the *Victorian Catholic Education Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2018* (VCEMEA 2018) is followed. Further, the school principal will also ensure that all other relevant CES Ltd and school-based policies and procedures (including Codes of Conduct, processes for managing and investigating complaints, misconduct, discipline, grievances, dispute resolution, and employee welfare and support), as well as any CCYP and other regulatory guidance, are considered to guide the investigation.

For an allegation against a current employee, this means that the Principal will follow the clause 13 process set out in the VCEMEA 2018 and follow the advice and guidance of the CES Ltd Safeguarding Team.

In all cases, before any findings are made or disciplinary action is taken, the subject of an allegation will be:

- notified of any adverse information that is credible, relevant and significant
- given a reasonable opportunity to respond to that information.

The CES Ltd Safeguarding Team (acting on the CES Ltd Chief Executive Officer 's behalf) in consultation with the Principal or CES Ltd Chief Executive Officer (for allegations against a Principal) will determine when the subject of the reportable allegation should be first told about an allegation, in order to ensure that any police investigation is not prejudiced; child safety risks are appropriately assessed and mitigated; and the investigation is not compromised, but remains procedurally fair.

### Initial investigation

**Note:** Upon receipt of a reportable allegation, the Principal or other relevant leader (for allegations against a Principal) will immediately contact the CES Ltd Safeguarding Team for advice.

The Principal or other relevant leader is then guided by the CES Ltd Safeguarding Team (acting under the authority of the CES Ltd Chief Executive Officer) to ensure an appropriate investigation is conducted into the reportable allegation/s by reference to the requirements of the RCS, together with any relevant guidance published by CES Ltd and the CCYP.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the CES Ltd Chief Executive Officer will make a decision on the reportable conduct findings recommended in the Investigation Report.

If the alleged conduct is potentially criminal in nature, Victoria Police must also be notified as a first priority and any investigation by Victoria Police will take precedence.

### Recordkeeping and the Privacy Act

The school maintains records of reportable allegations, written reports and reportable conduct investigation findings indefinitely.

The school must not publish information that would enable the identification of:

- a person who notified the CCYP
- a child in relation to whom a reportable allegation was made or a finding of reportable conduct was made.

The *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) provides more information on the meaning of publish, which includes making the information publicly available in writing or email.

The school maintains all records in accordance with the Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards.

## 6. Relevant legislation

- *Children Legislation Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Act 2017* (Vic.)
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic.)
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.)
- *Public Records Act 1973* (Vic.)

Date of Next Review	31/07/2024
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