

Child Protection and Safety Policy

Thomas Carr College has developed the following Child Protection and Safety Policy. This policy is an overarching document that provides key elements of our approach to protecting children from abuse.

The policy forms the foundation of the College's procedures, practices, decision-making processes and ultimately the College's culture with respect to child safety.

It is designed to be published on our public website as well as communicated through other mediums such as newsletters, our annual report and in induction and welcome packs for College Board members, staff and volunteers.

The College's Child Protection and Safety Policy has been approved and endorsed by the College's College Board and is regularly reviewed by the College Board.

Objectives

This policy provides the framework for:

- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child protection within the College;
- the creation of a positive and robust child protection culture;
- the promotion and open discussion of child protection issues within the College; and
- compliance with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection in Victoria.

Policy Commitments

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Child abuse includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect and a child's exposure to family violence. Thomas Carr College is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse and demonstrates this commitment through the implementation of a comprehensive Child Protection Program designed to keep children safe.

This 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:

"The person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ's teaching; that is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school (Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, n. 9)".

At Thomas Carr College we have a zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The College regards its child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture.

Our Commitment to Students

Thomas Carr College is committed to:

- nurturing faith and fostering positive, life giving relationships with others where the safety and wellbeing of all children in our College is paramount;
- providing a positive, nurturing, engaging and innovative learning environment;
- recognising the goodness of all members of the Thomas Carr College community, particularly our students and treating all with respect;
- listening to our students and empowering them by taking their views seriously and by addressing any concerns they raise with us;
- developing the capacity within our students for independent thought and informed decision making. In particular, this includes teaching children and young people the requisite skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing, both within the College and also in society generally; and
- regularly consulting with and seeking input from students regarding the creation of a safe school environment.

At Thomas Carr 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 including the development of a strong sense of social justice and of the skills that equip them to become active members of our society such as optimism, enthusiasm and resilience. We encourage the participation of students at all levels and across all aspects of College life and so the College provides many opportunities for students to develop leadership skills and to participate in leadership activities.

Opportunities for student leadership include the College Captains and Vice Captains, the Student Representative Council (SRC), House Leaders, College Ambassadors, Peer Support Leaders, Social Justice Captains, Liturgy Captains and Music Captains.

We teach students about what they can do if they feel unsafe and enable them to understand, identify, discuss and report on child safety. We listen to and act on any concerns students, or their parents/carers, raise with us and this is supported by a robust Student at Risk process through which we identify and provide support to students who are struggling or at risk in some way.

Through curriculum included in the College's Pastoral Care Program, Health and Human Development, Religious Education and the ID9 Personal Development program, as well as Reflection Days held at each year level, the College makes every effort to empower our students to learn about and develop skills in such areas as Healthy and Respectful Relationships, Resilience, Mental Health, Sexuality, Bullying and Restorative Practice.

Through our Pastoral Care structures and programs, we endeavor to nurture students who are mentally and physically able, optimistic, resilient, have a sense of purpose, healthy self-acceptance and the capacity to form sustained positive relationships and who can engage fully with life.

Our Commitment to Parents and Carers

Thomas Carr College is committed to:

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

Our Commitment to College Staff (including all employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy)

Thomas Carr College is committed to:

- providing all College staff with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles. This will include regular and appropriate learning opportunities on matters of child safety and wellbeing;
- 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 on the principles and intent of the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct and staff responsibilities to report concern;
- listening to all concerns voiced by Thomas Carr College staff, clergy, volunteers and contractors about keeping children and young people safe from harm; and
- providing opportunities for Thomas Carr College employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.

Strengthened Human Resources, Screening and Supervision Practices

Thomas Carr College takes all reasonable steps, including the application of thorough and rigorous screening processes to ensure that the College employs skilled and appropriate people to work with our children and young people. Child safety is a key focus in the selection and employment process for newly recruited and existing staff and volunteers at the College and is reinforced at every stage of the selection and employment process. Our commitment to child safety 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 College's Child Safety Code of Conduct and the Child Safety Policy.

Child Safe Values & 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 College's commitment to child safety is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse.

1. 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.
2. All children have the right to be safe and have the right to a thorough and systematic education in all aspects of personal safety, in partnership with their parents/guardians/caregivers.
3. All adults in our College, including teaching and support staff, clergy, volunteers and contractors, have a responsibility to care for children and young people, to positively promote their wellbeing and to protect them from any kind of harm or abuse.
4. Staff, clergy, volunteers, contractors, parents and students should feel free to raise concerns about child safety, knowing these will be taken seriously by the College's leadership.
5. The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
6. The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected.
7. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Safety Code of Conduct and Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy.
8. The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.
9. Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our College community. This includes the involvement in decision making processes, particularly those that have an impact on child safety and protection.
10. Procedures are in place to screen all staff, Direct Contact Volunteers** Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers who have direct contact with children.
11. Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
12. Child protection training is mandatory for all College Board members, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers.
13. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the College community.
14. Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
15. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.
16. Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained, with information being provided to those who have a right or a need to be informed, either legally or pastorally

***Direct Contact Volunteers are those volunteers who are involved in providing support, guidance and supervision directly to students and could potentially have direct contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service.*

The Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic) defines 'direct contact' as any contact between a person and a child (aged under 18) that involves:

- physical contact; or
- face to face contact; or
- contact by post or other written communication; or
- contact by telephone or other oral communication; or
- contact by email or other electronic communication.

Examples of Direct Contact Volunteer activities may include volunteers involved in College camps and excursions, coaching sporting teams or assisting in learning activities.

Child Protection Program

Thomas Carr College is committed to the effective implementation of our Child Protection Program and ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated. We adopt a risk management approach by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety risks based on a range of factors including the nature of our College's activities, physical and online environments and the characteristics of the student body.

Our Child Protection Program relates to all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse. It includes:

- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and associated key risk indicators;
- clear procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse;
- strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, parents and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child protection matters;
- procedures for recruiting and screening College Board members, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers;
- procedures for reporting reportable conduct and/or misconduct;
- pastoral care strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe;
- policies with respect to cultural diversity and students with disabilities;
- a child protection training program;
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children;
- guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality;
- policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Victorian Child Safe Standards); and
- a system for continuous review and improvement.

As a part of Thomas Carr College's induction process, all staff and Direct Contact Volunteers are required to complete a selection of training modules on the content of our Child Protection Program.

All staff, Direct Contact Volunteers and College Board members are provided with additional, ongoing child protection training at least annually.

Staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers are supported and supervised by the College's Child Safety Officer to ensure that they are compliant with the College's approach to child protection.

Expectation of our College Staff, Volunteers, Contractors and clergy: Code of Conduct

At Thomas Carr College, we expect College employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy to proactively ensure the safety of students at all times and to take appropriate action if there are concerns about the safety of any child at the College. All College employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy must remain familiar with the relevant laws, the Thomas Carr College Code of Conduct and College policies and procedures in relation to child protection and to comply with all requirements as set out in the Thomas Carr College Child Protection Program. The College's Code of Conduct recognises the critical role that member of the College community play in protecting the students in our care and establishes clear expectations of appropriate behaviour.

Responsibilities

Child protection is everyone's responsibility. At Thomas Carr College, all members of the College Board and staff, as well as volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. Specific responsibilities include:

College Board

Each member of the College Board is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the College's Child Protection and Safety Policy and the Child Protection Program to be effectively implemented within the College and are responsible for holding the Principal and executive team accountable for effective implementation.

The Principal

The Principal is responsible, and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Protection and Safety Policy and the College's Child Protection Program are implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child protection culture is maintained within the College.

The College's Child Safety Officer

Our Child Safety Officer receives additional specialised training with respect to child protection issues. They are the first point of contact for raising child protection concerns within the College. They are also responsible for championing child protection within the College and assisting in coordinating responses to child protection incidents.

Staff Members

All staff are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Safe Policy and our Child Protection Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with the College's Child Safety Officer.

Direct Contact Volunteers

All Direct Contact Volunteers, as defined in this policy, are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy, our Child Protection Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse.

It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with the College's Child Safety Officer.

Indirect Contact Volunteers

Indirect Contact Volunteers (or 'Indirect Volunteers') are those volunteers who are involved in providing support and services whilst not directly assisting a specific group of students.

All Indirect Volunteers are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

All Indirect Volunteers are required by the College to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Safety Code of Conduct.

Examples of Indirect Contact Volunteer activities may include assisting with College administrative functions.

Third Party Contractors

All Third Party Contractors (service providers) engaged by the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

Third Party Contractors include, for example, maintenance and building personnel, consultants, casual teachers, tutors, sports coaches and College cleaners.

This also includes music teachers and other extra-curricular teachers and instructors who are engaged by students and their families directly, rather than the College, but have an agreement with the College to use the College's facilities.

Direct Contact Contractors

Direct Contact Contractors are:

- those who have direct contact with students during the normal course of their work;
- those who may be in a position to establish a relationship of trust with a student notwithstanding that unsupervised access to students would be rare (for example full-time maintenance personnel); and
- any contractors whom a school is legally required to screen.

****The Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic) defines 'direct contact' as any contact between a person and a child (aged under 18) that involves:**

- physical contact; or
- face to face contact; or
- contact by post or other written communication; or
- contact by telephone or other oral communication; or
- contact by email or other electronic communication.

Indirect Contact Contractors

Indirect Contact Contractors are those contractors who do not meet the definition of "Direct Contact Contractor". Refer to *Third Party Contractors' Responsibilities* for more information.

All service providers engaged by the College are required by the College to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program.

The College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the service provider.

External Education Providers

An External Education Provider is any organisation that the College has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the College.

The delivery of such a course may take place on College premises or elsewhere.

All External Education Providers engaged by the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

All External Education Providers engaged by the College are required by the College to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program.

Thomas Carr College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the External Education Provider.

Reporting Child Protection Concerns

Our Child Protection Program provides detailed guidance for members of the College Board, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers as to how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to College's nominated Child Safety Officer. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.

Staff, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, Volunteers, students, parents/guardians and other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse or grooming are asked to contact the College's Senior Child Safety Officer, Geralyn McCarthy, by phoning 0416 059 673 or emailing geralyn.mccarthy@thomascarr.vic.edu.au

Communications will be treated confidentially on a "need to know basis".

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.

Implementing a Robust Risk-Management Approach

The College has adopted a proactive risk management approach to child protection by developing and implementing strategies to identify and mitigate our child protection risks based on:

- the nature of all College environments;

- the activities students undertake at the College (including the provision of services by contractors or outside the College's physical environment);
- physical and online environments that exist at the College; and
- the characteristics and needs of all of our students.

Policy & Program Review

Thomas Carr College is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Protection Program. The Program is regularly reviewed for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child protection related laws, regulations and standards.

Related Policies and Procedures

Risk Management Program

Compliance Program

Student Duty of Care Program

Occupational Health & Safety Program

Child Protection Staff Training

Recruitment & Selection Procedures

Induction Procedures

Policy status:	Reviewed
Key Stakeholders:	College staff, students, parents, volunteers, contractors
Endorsement Body:	College Executive
Ratification Body:	College Board Policy
Author:	Core Wellbeing Team
Date of Approval:	2017
Date of Scheduled Review:	2020

The content of this policy can be changed at the College Board's discretion at any time without notification.