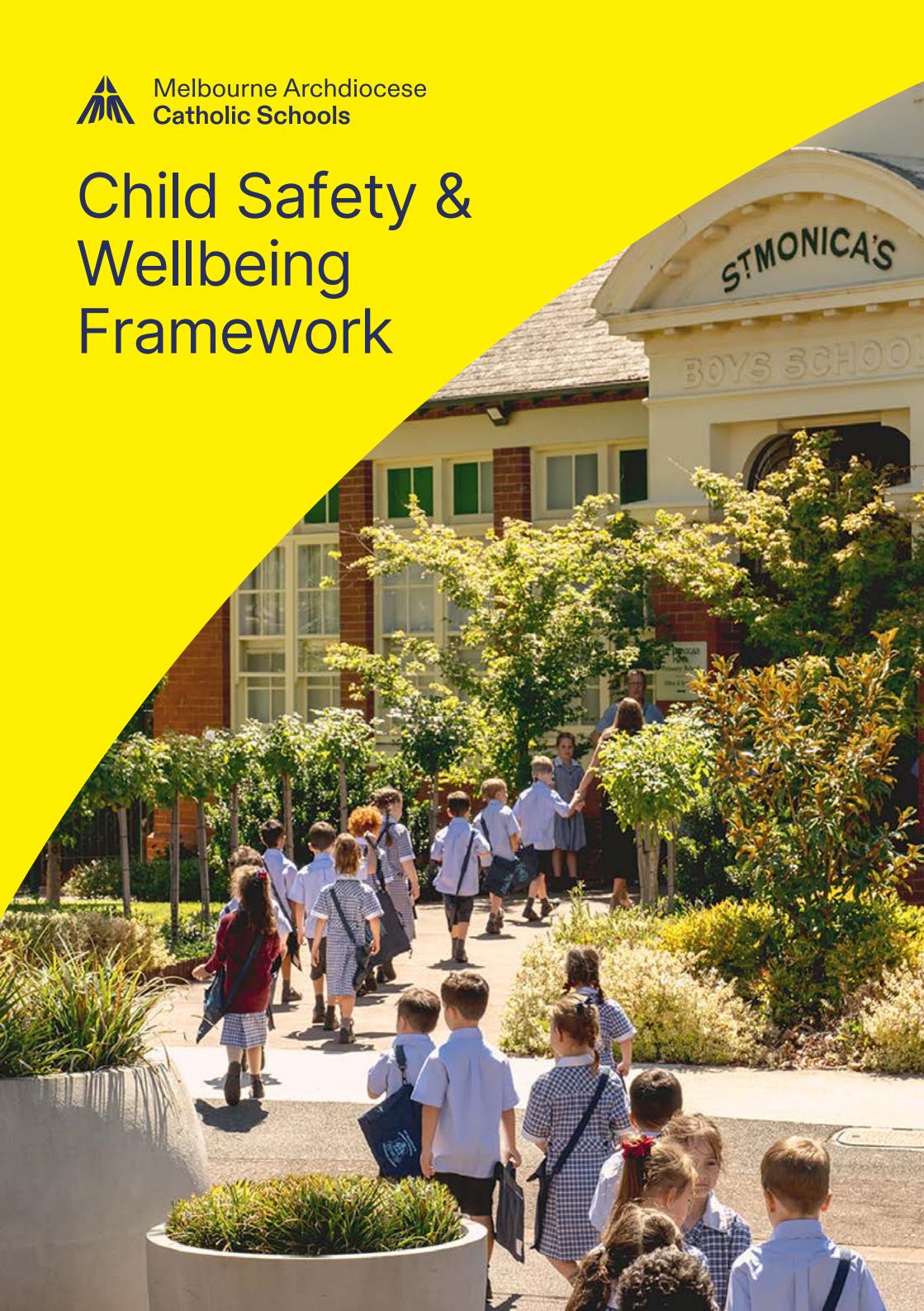




Melbourne Archdiocese
Catholic Schools

Child Safety & Wellbeing Framework



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Every child and young person in our community should feel and be safe and enabled to flourish.

Foreword: A message from Dr Edward Simons



In our Catholic schools, our shared mission enlivened by Jesus Christ calls us to uphold the dignity of every student and ensure that our schools are places of genuine care, belonging and hope. The MACS Child Safety and Wellbeing Framework reflects our deep and enduring commitment to the protection and wellbeing of children and young people. It affirms our collective responsibility as leaders, teachers, staff, parents and students to create environments where safety is front of mind in everything we do, all the time.

While we continue to make meaningful progress and improvement, it is important to acknowledge the truth that harm continues to occur. Each instance where we fall short, in whatever form, is one too many. This reality challenges us to listen more deeply, act more decisively, and continue to strengthen our systems, practices and resolve. This Framework

builds upon and aligns fully with the Victorian Child Safe Standards, our MACS 2030 ambition and the Flourishing Learners program. It provides a shared language where clear expectations and practical guidance enable us to live our commitment to child safety in every MACS school.

Creating and sustaining a child safe culture requires courage, humility and ongoing reflection. It asks each of us to listen deeply to the voices of children and young people, and to respond with compassion and integrity. Together, we can ensure our schools are places where every learner is enabled to flourish and reach their full potential.

With gratitude for the dedication of our school communities, and with hope for the families and students we serve, I commend this Framework as a vital expression of our Catholic mission in action.



Introduction

MACS' Child Safety Commitment

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) has zero tolerance for any form of child abuse, and is deeply committed to upholding and embedding the highest standards of child safety across our schools.

We are guided by our Catholic faith, and the unique and unrepeatable dignity of every person in our care. We are dedicated to creating an inclusive and protective environment where every child can feel and be safe.

We are responsible for inspiring and enabling every child to flourish and enrich the world.

Child safety is a shared responsibility for MACS, its employees including the board, executive leadership team, principals, teachers and staff, and the wider community.

MACS Child Safety and Wellbeing Framework purpose statement

The MACS Child Safety and Wellbeing Framework (Framework) articulates the purpose, principles, standards and policies of MACS to ensure that our commitment to child safety and wellbeing fulfils our mission of providing a Catholic education that fosters a formation of the whole person that is deeply and enduringly humanising.

The Framework provides the overarching alignment of MACS' purpose, principles, standards and policies in regard to child safety and wellbeing.

This Framework is designed to give MACS school communities a clear understanding of how the following elements support one another and ensure consistency:

- the guiding purpose behind our commitment to child safety and wellbeing
- the standards and practice principles through which this purpose is brought to life
- the policies by which these standards and practice principles are enacted.

The Framework should be read as part of a suite of key documents, including the:

- [Victorian Catholic School Statement of Commitment to Child Safety](#)
- [MACS Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy](#)
- [MACS Child Safety Code of Conduct](#)
- [MACS PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to Abuse – Reporting Obligations Policy](#)
- [MACS Code of Conduct](#)
- [MACS Faith Formation Framework](#).

Informed by best practice and legal obligations, the Framework supports all MACS offices and schools in fostering cultures of safety and inclusion.



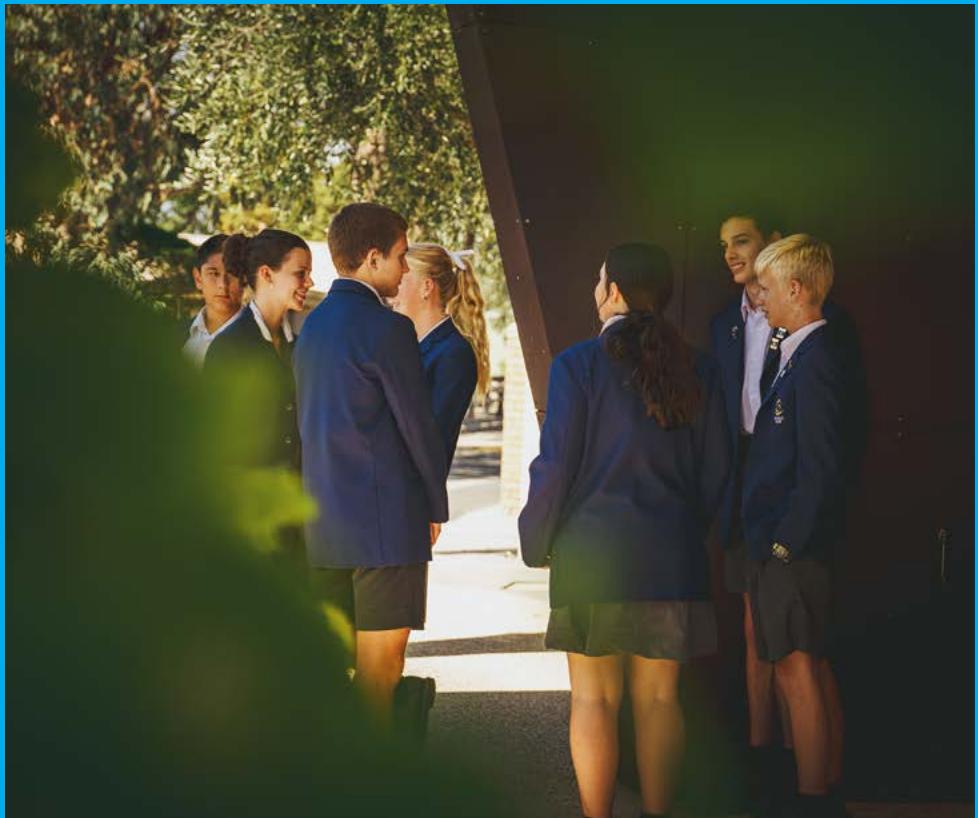
MACS Child Safety and Wellbeing Framework objectives:

- to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and young people
- to embed child-centred principles in practice
- to guide consistent, ethical and compliant behaviour
- to build a culture of awareness and prevention
- to foster safe, inclusive and nurturing environments
- to support transparency, accountability and continuous improvement
- to reflect Catholic faith in child safety practices.



Context

The MACS Child Safety and Wellbeing Framework (Framework) is a formative document that aligns with, and is driven by, the *MACS 2030: Forming Lives to Enrich the World* strategic plan.



Demonstrating MACS' commitment to the safety and wellbeing of young people, this Framework reflects, in its entirety, the purpose and vision of MACS 2030. At the heart of the Framework are the children and young people for whom the purpose: 'Forming lives of faith, hope and love in the light of Jesus Christ' and the vision: 'Every student is inspired and enabled to flourish and enrich the world' of the strategic plan were created. MACS knows and embraces the fundamental tenet that learners will not flourish without being afforded a safe, welcoming and inclusive community.

The Flourishing Learners strategic theme established by MACS is supported by key initiatives such as *Vision for Instruction*, *Vision for Engagement* and *Forming Hearts* (MACS Faith Formation Framework). The success and continued development of these initiatives rely on the robust foundation of child safety, anchored in strong policies, a supportive culture and system-wide expertise to ensure meaningful impact. In the same way that this Framework and its principles are founded through the Victorian Child Safe Standards, *Vision for Instruction* and *Vision for Engagement* reflect a significant acknowledgement and complex embedding of the Child Safe Standards, ensuring that they are lived inherently in all practice. These practices contribute powerfully to the enabling of an ongoing experience of formation, centred on the person and teaching of Jesus Christ, who cast a timeless vision of human flourishing for every person as a child of God.

MACS acknowledges the profound and lasting trauma experienced by survivors of institutional abuse, their families and all affected by institutional failures within a Catholic context. MACS is committed to reconciliation, and to ensuring the way children are protected, supported and heard is based on best practice and integrity, and is faithful to our child safety commitment. We are dedicated to fostering a culture of safety and accountability, one that unequivocally rejects abuse in all its forms and prioritises the wellbeing of every child.

The Framework is founded on a deep understanding of and commitment to Ministerial Order No. 1359: *Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises*. This Framework brings together four practice principles that have been created to reflect the 11 Victorian Child Safe Standards and the principles as articulated in the MACS Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. These four practice principles synthesise the foundational principles upon which all policies, procedures and practices are developed.

The Framework is informed by the latest research in child safety, and by contemporary and evidence-based approaches. This Framework considers and adopts recommendations from a range of experts, with particular reference to the ways in which governments and institutions can do better to protect children against sexual abuse. During the formation of the Framework, MACS staff participated widely in consultation with a range of stakeholders for contribution and feedback.

The Framework articulates MACS' expectations and the minimum standards required to create and maintain behaviours and practices that are safe and founded on a deep understanding of the risks to children and young people.

Child Safe Cultures

MACS understands that developing and maintaining a child safe culture requires deliberate strategy, reflection, review and continuous improvement.

Positive child safe cultures proactively protect children and young people. MACS acknowledges that the absence of a positive child safe culture creates unacceptable risk, whereby organisations are more likely to fail their moral and legal obligations.



MACS aims to embed child safe cultures and, as such, we intentionally and systematically:

- value the sacredness of every individual by placing children's and young people's safety and wellbeing at the centre of our policies, procedures, decision-making and actions
- support schools in their contextualised approach to open dialogue with families and other community members, so everyone (children, staff, parents, carers, family members, volunteers and others) feels confident, enabled and supported to safely disclose concerns regarding child safety or wellbeing
- engage in genuine dialogue with children and young people to provide agency in decision-making and risk mitigation
- implement measures and initiatives that aim to mitigate harm to children and young people
- implement fit-for-purpose processes for the raising of concerns and the identification of behaviours that could cause harm to children and young people
- respond in a prompt manner to concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm
- employ appropriate adults to care for and teach children and young people, cemented by thorough and nationally recognised screening measures.

Practice Principles



The Framework brings together four practice principles. They are the foundational principles upon which all policies, procedures and practices are developed.

These practice principles have been purposefully developed to assist MACS to uphold the safety, rights and wellbeing of children and young people in our school communities. They serve as a foundation for the work of all MACS leaders, staff and volunteers in creating a child safe organisation.

MACS deliberately and intentionally places children at the centre of the Framework to ensure that their voices are heard, their participation is valued and their sense of belonging is secured. The emphasis on equity, dignity and open disclosure creates a culture where children feel – and are – included, safe and empowered.

These practice principles are:

- aligned with Ministerial Order No. 1359 and the Victorian Child Safe Standards
- supported by *MACS 2030: Forming Lives to Enrich the World* – our inaugural strategic plan
- supportive of the MACS Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- operationalised through the MACS child safety strategy, MACS Care.

The four practice principles



1. Inclusion, Belonging and Empowerment

Children belong, have a voice and are empowered to be safe.

Voice
Rights
Equity
Participation

'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full'
(John 10: 10)

Key Child Safe Standards: 1, 3, 5

This principle reflects MACS' responsibility to provide a culturally safe and inclusive environment where the identities and experiences of all children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, are respected and valued.

By embedding equity and diversity into leadership, governance and everyday practice, children and young people are supported to experience genuine belonging, and are empowered to understand their rights, participate in decisions that affect them and contribute to shaping safe environments.

This principle emphasises partnerships with families and communities, staff capability, and accessible, child-friendly processes for raising concerns. In practice, this means that safety, inclusion and empowerment are not add-ons, but are integral to the culture of every MACS office and school community.





2. Cultural Safety & Competence

Respecting diversity and culture builds safe, inclusive communities.

Respect
Diversity
Culture
Community

'There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus'
(Galatians 3: 28)

Key Child Safe Standards:
1, 3, 4, 5

This principle recognises that children and young people thrive when their cultural identities are acknowledged, valued and respected, and when staff are equipped with the competence to engage inclusively across diverse contexts.

Through meaningful engagement with families and communities, MACS schools foster belonging and faith-based partnership, ensuring that children's voices and cultural strengths are reflected in decision-making and daily practice.

This principle upholds diversity, promotes equity for vulnerable cohorts, and embeds inclusive practices into governance and culture. In practice, cultural safety and competence enable all children and young people to participate confidently and feel respected, valued and supported within their school community.

3. Governance & Accountability

Strong leadership, clear policies and transparent action protect children.

**Leadership
Transparency
Policies
Reporting**

'Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful'

(1 Corinthians 4: 2)

Key Child Safe Standards: 2, 7, 10, 11

This principle reflects MACS' commitment to embed child safety and wellbeing into governance, culture and everyday practice.

It requires that MACS offices and schools maintain transparent, clearly documented policies and procedures for identifying, responding to and reporting child safety incidents, ensuring that accountability is not optional but central to every decision.

Guided by a Catholic vision of leadership and service, this principle establishes shared responsibility across leaders, staff, families and communities to uphold the highest standards of integrity in child safety.

Through accountable structures and a culture of openness, MACS schools foster confidence that safety is actively monitored, concerns are taken seriously, and every child and young person is protected and supported.





4. Capability & Innovation

Risk awareness, skilled staff and ongoing learning keep children safe.

Risk
Training
Recruitment
Development

Key Child Safe Standards:
6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11

This principle reflects MACS' commitment to strengthening the capability of all who work with children and young people.

It requires MACS offices and schools to adopt robust risk management policies and procedures to proactively identify, assess and minimise risks to child safety across physical, online and relational environments.

It also emphasises the importance of recruiting suitable people, providing thorough induction and offering ongoing professional development, so that staff and volunteers are skilled, confident and accountable in their safeguarding roles.

*'Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good'
(1 Corinthians 12: 7)*

Application of the Framework

The implementation of the Framework will be operationalised and delivered via the MACS child safety strategy referred to as 'MACS Care'.

MACS Care is deliberately curated to raise awareness, encourage accountability and inspire action at every level of the organisation to ensure the safety of children and young people. By creating a concise and impactful narrative, MACS Care seeks to resonate with all members of the MACS community, prompting them to actively contribute to creating safer environments for children and young people.

MACS Care is focused on embedding the Victorian Child Safe Standards and building stronger ongoing trust in Catholic education. This approach will insist on MACS schools being cultures where child safety is a tangible priority and a shared responsibility.

Within MACS Care, the 11 Victorian Child Safe Standards are championed and will assist MACS schools to meet their formal compliance obligations. Based on the four practice principles articulated in the Framework, MACS Care will embed the Child Safe Standards through the lens of a system dedicated to 'forming lives to enrich the world'.

The MACS Care strategic approach incorporates:

- **care (values and culture):** This involves long-term, principles-based messaging that builds identity and reinforces MACS' commitment to child safety
- **Child Safe Standards (compliance and accountability):** This is used when leaders and staff need to understand or demonstrate alignment with specific obligations
- **child safety in practice (everyday behaviour):** This includes providing clear and straightforward guidance, so we can ensure that everyone in the MACS community understands their role in maintaining a safe environment for children.





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