

CHILD SAFE POLICY

Introduction to this policy

Damascus College is a dynamic Christ-centred learning community that values each member and is committed to inspiring and challenging students to reach their potential and contribute confidently to the global community. Respectful relationships that value all members in an inclusive and welcoming community which celebrates diversity in a safe and supportive school is a cornerstone of our strategic objectives.

The school ensures the care, safety, wellbeing, and protection of its students in keeping with the Catholic tradition, which honours the sacred dignity of each person.

At Damascus College, we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of our school. ([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: that is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school (Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, n. 9).

The Damascus College Child Safety Policy reflects the school community's shared commitment and expectations in relation to child safety in our school. This Policy provides an overview of our child safety commitments, clear expectations, strategies and processes in place in our school to embed a culture where the safety of children is paramount.

This Policy provides an overview of how Damascus College will:

- promote child safety and protection of children from abuse
- comply with the requirements of Ministerial Order 870 – Child safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in Victorian Schools;
- seek to mitigate and prevent the risk of abuse; and
- respond to any allegations of child abuse in our school community.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with all other Child Safety policies, which provide more detailed procedures and with the CECV Positive Behaviour Guidelines 2018.

Rationale for this Policy

The Damascus College Limited Board (the Board) is committed to:

- zero tolerance of child abuse;
- listening to and empowering children and young people; and
- keeping children and young people safe.

The Board maintains governance oversight of the school Damascus College which operates primarily from 1412 Geelong Rd, Mt Clear. The Board executes its management responsibility through the Principal and the Leadership Team of the College to ensure Damascus College is safe for children and young people and is a place where children and young people can flourish.



The Board has particular responsibilities for the safeguarding of children and young people as required by Ministerial Order No. 870: Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools (MO 870). This places accountability for managing the risk of child abuse in schools with the Board. Consistent with MO 870, the Board requires Damascus College to have appropriate arrangements to regulate the conduct and decisions of school staff to develop and embed a culture of child safety for all students.

These arrangements include implementing and complying with the Damascus College Child Safe Policies and having clear and comprehensive procedures and reporting mechanisms. The objective is for the Board and the wider school community to be confident in the school's capacity to make and implement appropriate decisions, with child safety as a guiding principle.

Damascus College Limited is committed to supporting schools to take a proactive role in the care, wellbeing and protection of children and young people.

The Board maintains governance oversight of the College. Damascus College Limited management is under the direction of the College Principal who, with the support of the leadership team, has a responsibility to implement, test, review and refresh these policies and procedures to ensure the safety of children and young people and make Damascus College an environment where children and young people can flourish.

This document must be read in conjunction with other all other policies and procedures in the Damascus College Limited Child Safe Policy Suite.

Principles

Gospel values and the principles of Catholic Social Teaching are reflected in Damascus College policies for the care, safety, and welfare of students. These values influence both Board actions and response to promoting environments that are child safe:

Damascus College Safeguarding Children and Young People Policies been developed to promote the principles laid out in the *Integrity in the Service of the Church*, a document produced by the National Committee for Professional Standards, 2011. A Committee of the Australian Catholic Bishops & the Leaders of Religious Institutes in Australia. A full explanation of the Guiding Principles is contained in the publication: *National Committee for Professional Standards, 2011, "Integrity in the Service of the Church"*, September 2011. [file \(catholic.org.au\)](http://catholic.org.au)

The five Guiding Principles are:

- *Commitment to Justice and Equity*
- *Upholding the dignity of all people and their right to respect*
- *Commitment to safe and supportive relationships*
- *Reaching out to those who are poor, alienated or marginalised*
- *Striving for excellence in the performance of their work*



An integral part of fulfilling these guiding principles is an absolute commitment to child safety and adherence to the Child Safe Standards, as outlined in Ministerial Order No. 870.

The Child Safe Standards are;

Standard 1: governance and leadership

- Strong and clear governance arrangements allow leaders to ensure child safety is a focus within their organisation.

Standard 2: clear commitment to child safety

- Demonstrate your commitment to child safety by documenting how your organisation will meet its duty of care and responsibilities.

Standard 3: code of conduct

- Establish clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.

Standard 4: human resource practices

- Develop and implement human resource practices that reduce the risk of child abuse occurring within your organisation.

Standard 5: responding and reporting

- All staff and volunteers must understand their role in keeping children safe, including their reporting responsibilities.

Standard 6: risk management and mitigation

- To reduce the likelihood of harm organisations must think about and define the risks.

Standard 7: empowering children

- Children have a right to be heard and have their concerns and ideas taken seriously.

1. School Profile

Damascus College is a Catholic co-educational secondary College located on a beautiful 22-hectare site, seven kilometres from the Ballarat CBD. The College community offers learning opportunities which inspire and challenge students to reach their potential and to contribute confidently to a global community. The College caters to approximately 1160 young people from the greater Ballarat region.

Damascus College is committed to providing equitable access and opportunity for all. The school considers that awareness of, recognition of, and responsiveness to the needs and rights of all individuals are essential to human dignity. Inclusive practices embrace and celebrate diversity, invite belonging and provide opportunities for participation and achievement of appropriate learning outcomes.

2. Purpose

Damascus College is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for all students of the College and College community. The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate



the strong commitment of Damascus College to the care, safety and wellbeing of all students at our school. It provides an outline of the policies, procedures and strategies developed to keep students safe from harm, including all forms of abuse in our school environment, on campus, online and in other locations provided by the school.

This policy takes into account relevant legislative requirements within the state of Victoria, including the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in [Ministerial Order No. 870](#). Damascus College Ltd, as governing authority, and the Principal have direct responsibility for ensuring that the requirements of MO 870 are met within the school.

This policy applies to students, College members and directors, school staff, including school employees, volunteers, contractors, and those in religious ministry.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following related Damascus College and school policies and procedures:

- Damascus College Limited Child Safe Governance
- Damascus College Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct
- Damascus College PROTECT Reporting and Responding Obligations

3. Policy Review

This policy is reviewed every year, and we undertake to seek feedback from students, parents, careers, staff and volunteers.

4. Responsibilities

The Principal and the Leadership Team have overall authority for the implementation of this policy.

5. Scope

The scope of this policy covers all members of the Damascus College community including but not limited to Students, College members and directors, school staff, including school employees, volunteers, contractors, and those in religious ministry.

6. Definitions

A member of the **Damascus College community** is any person who is associated with Damascus College.

Child: A child or a young person in attendance within the school environment.

Child abuse includes:

- a) any act committed against a child involving:
 - a sexual offence
 - an offence under section 49B (2) of the **Crimes Act 1958** (grooming)



- b) the infliction, on a child, of:
- physical violence
 - serious emotional or psychological harm
- c) serious neglect of a child ([Ministerial Order No. 870- Child Safe Standards - Managing the risk of child abuse in schools](#))

Child Information Sharing Scheme permits information sharing entities (including schools) to **request** or **disclose** information about any person for the purpose of promoting the wellbeing or safety of a child or group of children.

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 - abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse. ([Ministerial Order No. 870 - Child Safe Standards - Managing the risk of child abuse in schools.](#))

Child neglect includes 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: Generally, consists of any non-accidental infliction by any person of physical violence on a child. ([PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#))

Child sexual abuse occurs when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve that child 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 is predatory conduct engaged in 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.)* to make a report to the designated authority in order to protect children from harm relating to physical and sexual abuse. The principal, teachers, medical practitioners, nurses, student counsellors and those in religious ministry are mandatory reporters under this Act.



(PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools)

PROTECT Protocol is a joint, cross-sectoral protocol for use in Victorian schools. This website and protocol provide advice and resources to schools and mandated reporters on the actions to be taken to respond to suspicions or allegations of child abuse. A range of materials are available for all schools.

Reasonable Belief: When school staff, or other mandated person/s, 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)

Reportable Conduct Scheme: was created under the *Child Wellbeing, and Safety Act 2005 (Vic.)* and requires schools to notify the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) if an allegation of reportable conduct (a reportable allegation) is made against one of their employees.

Five types of "reportable conduct" are listed in the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Children's 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

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a) a campus of the school
- b) online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- c) other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events). (Ministerial Order No. 870- Child Safe Standards -Managing the risk of child abuse in schools)

School staff means an individual working in a school environment who is:

- a) directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
- b) a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)
- c) a minister of religion (Ministerial Order No. 870- Child Safe Standards -Managing the risk of child abuse in schools.)



7. Commitment to Child Safety

All children and young people have the right to feel safe and be safe. The wellbeing of children and young people in the care of Damascus College will always be the first priority with a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse. Damascus College aims to create a child-safe and child-friendly environment where children and young people are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for the student's own safety. There is particular attention paid to the most vulnerable children and young people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children and young people with a disability.

Damascus College commitment to students

Damascus commits to:

- a) the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people enrolled in the College
- b) providing children and young people with positive and nurturing experiences
- c) listening to children and young people and empowering them by taking student views seriously and addressing any concerns that are raised
- d) taking action to ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse or harm
- e) teaching children and young people the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing
- f) Seeking input and feedback from students regarding the creation of a safe College environment.

Damascus commitment to and with parents and carers

Damascus commits to:

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

College commitment to College staff (College employees, volunteers, contractors)

Damascus commits to:

- a) Providing all staff with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles. This will include regular and appropriate learning opportunities



- b) 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 in the principles and intent of the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct, and staff responsibilities to report concerns
- c) Listening to all concerns voiced by staff, volunteers, and contractors about keeping children and young people safe from harm
- d) Providing opportunities for College employees, volunteers, contractors to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.

8. Procedures and responsibilities

Everyone employed or volunteering at Damascus College has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all students is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make. The College Principal with the support of the Leadership Team has overall responsibility for monitoring compliance with the Child Safe Standards in the school.

Responsibilities for Child Safety

Principal:

- 1) Ensures the College takes specific actions to protect children in line with Ministerial Order No 870 and other legal responsibilities
- 2) Promotes a culture of child safety in the College
- 3) Takes reasonable action to ensure the inclusion of children and young people of diverse backgrounds and abilities
- 4) Refines and implements strategies to embed a culture of child safety at the College
- 5) Allocates roles and responsibilities for achieving the child safe strategies
- 6) Informs the College community about the strategies, and allocated roles and responsibilities
- 7) Periodically reviews the effectiveness of the strategies put into practice and, if considered appropriate, revises those strategies
- 8) Implements the Child Safe Policy, informs the College community about the policy and makes the policy available on the College website
- 9) Ensures the College website holds:
 - child safety policies and procedures
 - roles and responsibilities in relation to child safety
 - a copy of the current Child Safety Code of Conduct
 - the procedure for reporting allegations of suspected child abuse so that it is accessible to children and young people, College staff, and the wider community



- information about how a child or young person or adult can disclose abuse or report any concerns about child safety
 - information about the supports available to those who disclose abuse or concerns
 - the Damascus College Concerns and Complaints Policy
 - the Damascus College Whistleblower Policy
- 10) Implements the Damascus College Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct for all staff and volunteers in the College community
 - 11) Implements the practices for a child safe environment in College staff selection, supervision, induction, training and support.
 - 12) Implements the obligations for Responding to Allegations Policy and Procedure
 - 13) Implements the practices of the Damascus College Risk Management processes
 - 14) Monitors and reviews the effectiveness of risk management strategies used by the College to mitigate the risk of child abuse
 - 15) At least annually, ensures that all College staff undertake training about their individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse, current and emerging child abuse risks in the College environment and what constitutes effective practice in child safety standards
 - 16) Reports to the College Board on child safety compliance
 - 17) Monitors child safety training register for staff, contractors, volunteers
 - 18) Ensures child safety is a standing item for staff and Board meetings.
 - 19) Works with Leadership to implement processes to identify specific student characteristics that may impact on child safety for individual students
 - 20) Provides regular updates on child safety in the College newsletter and ensures child safety materials are displayed in staff and public areas
 - 21) Supports, encourages and enables College staff, families and children and young people to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety concerns
 - 22) Supports or assists children who disclose child abuse or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse
 - 23) Puts in place a system for making, securing and retaining records of compliance with child safety standards
 - 24) Oversees the College adherence to the requirements of the Child Information Sharing Scheme

Child Protection Officer

The Child Protection Officer assists the principal to ensure the safety of all students and young people. At Damascus College, this role is fulfilled by the Deputy Principal, and it is a component of that role's position description. The Child Protection Officer works in collaboration with those responsible for Risk Management within the College in identifying and mitigating risks in child safety. The Child Protection Officer with the Principal is



responsible for informing staff, students and College community on policies, procedures and practices and identifying professional learning.

College Staff and Volunteers:

- 1) Ensure children and young people are treated with dignity and respect, acting with propriety, providing a duty of care, and protecting children and young people in their care
- 2) Assist children and young people to develop positive, responsible and caring attitudes and behaviours which recognise the rights of all people to be safe and free from abuse
- 3) Provide a physically and psychologically safe environment where the wellbeing of children and young people is nurtured
- 4) Undertake regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to child safety and the wellbeing of children and young people
- 5) Undertake and implement professional learning such as the principle of inclusion, resilience, behaviour management, healthy and respectful relations, critical incidents, pastoral care and child abuse awareness and preventions
- 6) Ensure curriculum design integrates appropriate knowledge and skills to enhance students' understanding of being safe and engages them in curriculum design
- 7) Implement teaching and learning strategies that acknowledge and support student empowerment and participation and inclusion
- 8) Follow the legislative and internal College processes if, in the course of their work, they form a reasonable belief that a child or young person has been or is being abused or neglected
- 9) Follow the step-by-step guide to making a report as outlined in [PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#)
- 10) Follow the Damascus Child Safety Policy and the Damascus Code of Conduct
- 11) Remain familiar with the relevant laws, the code of conduct, and policies and procedures in relation to child protection and comply with all requirements.

Volunteers and Contractors:

- 1) Participate in College requirements for induction and ongoing training in child safety
- 2) Be familiar with the relevant laws, the code of conduct, and policies and procedures in relation to child protection and comply with College requirements
- 3) Ensure students are treated with dignity and respect
- 4) Follow Damascus College policies and procedures including those for signing-in and out
- 5) Follow the Damascus College Child Safety Code of Conduct
- 6) Report immediately any concerns or issues regarding child safety to principal or child protection officer



College Board

- 1) Undertake regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to child safety and the wellbeing of children and young people
- 2) Include child safety as a standing item on the Board Meeting agenda
- 3) Provide governance and advice to the principal on strategies for a child safe school

The Principal, Child Safety Officer or staff member will follow the step-by-step guide to making a report as outlined in [PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools](#) or address the matter as outline in [PROTECT Identifying and responding to Student Sexual Offending](#).

Concerned Parent or Community Member

If a parent or Community member is concerned about the safety of a Student of the College the College Principal, Child Protection Officer or Assistant Principal Student Wellbeing can assist:

1. To report a concern
2. To talk about something that is worrying a member of the community
3. to provide support for a child or young person or someone else for whom a concern is held

The College takes all allegations of child abuse or threats to child safety seriously.

The College seeks to treat anyone who reports a concern with respect and dignity.

Screening and Recruitment of School Staff

Damascus College will apply thorough and rigorous screening processes in the recruitment of employees and volunteers involved in child-connected work. All teachers are required to have registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT). 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 Damascus College [Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct](#) and all child safety policies and procedures prior to commencement of employment.

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

When recruiting and selecting employees, contractors and volunteers involved in child-connected work, we make all reasonable efforts to:

- confirm the applicant's VIT, Working with Children Check and National Police Check status and/or professional registration (as relevant)



- obtain proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications relevant to the position
- verify the applicant's history of work involving children
- obtain references that address the applicant's suitability for the job and working with children Once employed, staff are taken through an induction process that further reiterates the person's duties and responsibilities regarding child safety and child protection. All staff and volunteers are required to read and sign the Damascus College Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct prior to commencing work. All new staff and volunteers are supervised regularly to ensure their behaviour towards children is appropriate and to monitor their compliance with the school's child protection policies.

We have processes for monitoring and assessing the continuing suitability of school staff to work with children, including regular reviews of the status of Working with Children Checks and teaching staff professional registration requirements such as Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration. The ongoing suitability of staff for child-connected work is monitored and assessed as a part of the Annual Review Meeting process.

Education and Training for School Staff

Damascus College provides employees, volunteers and those in religious ministry with regular and appropriate opportunities to develop their knowledge of openness to and ability to address child safety 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. All mandatory reporters are required to complete the online modules, <https://www.vit.vic.edu.au/news/news/2018/protecting-children-mandatory-reporting-elearning-modules>

Reporting and responding Damascus College

Damascus College complies with the 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.) and the recommendations of the *Betrayal of Trust* report.

Any child safety complaints, disclosures, or breaches of the Damascus College Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct are documented and stored in accordance with security and privacy requirements.

Child protection reporting obligations fall under separate pieces of legislation with differing reporting requirements. The different policies at Damascus College set out the responsibilities and procedures that apply.

Damascus College Child Safeguarding Reporting Obligations Policy 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. It is a requirement that Damascus College follow the PROTECT protocol *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse* for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse.

Damascus College adopts and implements the Four Critical Actions for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse.

The *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse* are:

1. Responding to an Emergency
2. Reporting to Authorities
3. Contacting Parents/Carers
4. Providing Ongoing Support

The *Damascus College Child, Safe Reporting Obligations Procedures*, details the procedures for staff, volunteers, and families to:

- identify the indicators of a child or young person who may be in need of protection
- understand how a 'reasonable belief' is formed
- make a report of a child or young person who may be in need of protection
- comply with mandatory reporting obligations under child protection law and their legal obligations relating to criminal child abuse and grooming under criminal law.

Staff are to use the template provided in *Protect: Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools* to record their notes.

The internal procedures for mandatory reporting are contained in the Damascus College *Protect – Reporting and Responding Obligations procedures*

At Damascus College if any member of our school community has concerns for a child's safety they need to discuss, they can report this to the school principal, Matthew Byrne or the Deputy Principal and Child Protection Officer, Chris Grant.

If the principal or Deputy Principal are not available, and the matter is urgent, then it should be reported to a staff member (All staff members are obliged to assist with child safety). In the first instance, this may be the Teacher Advisor or House Leader.

The Principal, Deputy Principal (as Child Protection Officer) or staff member will follow the step-by-step guide to making a report as outlined in *PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools*.



Persons Responsible for Responding to Allegations of Suspected Child Abuse

These policy and procedures cover all forms of child abuse as defined in the *Education Training and Reform Act 2006 (Vic)*.

The following persons and positions of responsibility are obliged to manage promptly the school's response to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse made by or in relation to a child, school staff, visitors, of other persons while connected to Damascus College.

Person(s)	Position of Responsibility	Responsibility
Matthew Byrne	Principal	Manage promptly the school's response to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse and ensure that the allegation or disclosure is taken seriously.
Chris Grant	Deputy Principal and Child Protection Officer	
Chris Grant	Child Protection Officer	Monitor overall school compliance with this procedure
Catherine Newman	School Compliance Officer	
Andrew Robertson	Assistant Principal	Manage promptly the school's response to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse, and ensure that the allegation or disclosure is taken seriously if the principal is unavailable/unable to do so
Lynda Calistro	Human Resource Leader	
Tim O'Farrell	Safeguarding and Standards Manager E: tofarrell@ceob.edu.au P: 03 5337 7175	Manage promptly the response where the principal is the subject of a child safety incident, disclosure, or suspicion.
Matthew Byrne	Principal	Head of entity

The roles and responsibilities contained in the Damascus College Safeguarding Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures do not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse.

The school will make, secure, and retain records of any allegation of child abuse and the school's response.



The school commits to protect any child connected to alleged child abuse until the allegation is resolved.

Risk Management

Damascus College is committed to proactively identifying and assessing risks to student safety across our school environments and reducing or eliminating (where possible) all potential sources of harm. We document, implement, monitor, and periodically review our risk management strategies for child safety and ensure that the strategies change as needed and as new risks arise.

At Damascus College, the Deputy Principal undertakes risk management assessments, for camps excursions and international trips the Compliance Officer supports the Deputy Principal in risk assessment. The Compliance Officer develops strategies for the risk register and works with the Principal and Deputy to ensure that staff are informed of strategies to mitigate risks as well as policy, procedures and practices to support child safety. All staff are responsible to consider risk management and child safety measures.

See also Damascus College's [Child Safety Risk Assessment](#).

Student Empowerment and Participation

Students at Damascus College are actively encouraged to openly express their views and feel comfortable about giving voice to the things that are important to them. The Teacher Advisor program is designed to build trusting relationships between the College, the family and the student to support all aspects of their educational development journey.

In our learning and teaching programs, students learn 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 that students, or their parents or carers, raise with us.

The curriculum design integrates appropriate knowledge and skills to enhance students' understanding of being safe and knowing how to report instances when they do not feel safe. Teaching and learning strategies that acknowledge and support student voice are implemented.

Publication and Communication

Damascus College's child safety policies and procedures are available on the school website or in print from the school administration office on request. A child friendly version of the policy is also available. These policies will be explained to students through the personal and social learning curriculum using age-appropriate language and activities. The age-appropriate policies will also include information for children about how to report to someone if they are feeling unsafe or have been abused.

Educators will work with students through the TA program and the curriculum to understand the best ways to let someone - a responsible, trusted adult – know if they are feeling unsafe or have been abused.



Relevant Legislation

- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.)
- *Working with Children Act 2005* (Vic.)
- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic.)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic.)
- *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth)
- *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.)

Three new criminal offences have been introduced under this Act:

- a) **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.
- b) **Failure to protect offence**: The 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.
- c) **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.

Staff should refer to the [Damascus College Child Safeguarding Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures](#) for more information about these offences and the responsibilities for staff in relation to them.

Breach of Policy

Where an **employee** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this Policy, Damascus may start the process under clause 13 of the *Victorian Catholic Education Multi Enterprise Agreement 2013* (VCEMEA) for managing employment concerns. This may result in disciplinary consequences.

Where the **principal** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the concerned party is advised to contact the Board Chair of Damascus College Limited or the Manager Safeguarding and Standards for assistance at Catholic Education Ballarat (CEB). Ph: 03 5337 7175

Where any **other member of the College community** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the College is to take appropriate action in accordance with Reporting Obligations, Damascus Concerns and Complaints Policy and/or to contact the Deputy Principal as Child Protection Officer for assistance.



Related Policies

- Damascus College Child Safe Governance Policy and Procedures
- Damascus College Reporting and Responding Obligations Policy and Procedures
- Damascus College Safeguarding children and young people Code of Conduct

Associated Documents

Damascus College Vision and Mission Statement