



Saint Thomas Aquinas College

**DOC41603 CHILD SAFETY INFORMATION BOOKLET
FOR ST THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE COMMUNITY**

VERSION 2020 (v2.2)





ST THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE CHILD SAFETY INFORMATION

The St Thomas Aquinas College Child Safety Action Plan outlines a range of approaches to embedding a culture of Child Safety at the College. This Action Plan looks at ways the College can develop a culture of Child Safety with its staff, students and parents/guardians. The College takes Child Safety very seriously and is looking to consistently improve its educational and welfare programs with a view to ensuring the student is consistently at the centre of our focus.

Child Safety and our Staff

Every meeting at STAC has on its Agenda 'Child Safety'. This helps to ensure that Child Safety issues are permanently at the centre of our thinking across all levels of College operations. Throughout the year, we discuss key issues relating to Child Safety as part of our internal professional development program. This includes going through our Statement of Commitment to Child Safety, our Staff Code of Conduct, Duty of Care policies and other policies that have a bearing on child safety issues within the College.

Clear *expectations* exist that staff members and all others engaged in child-connected work will conduct themselves in ways that promote and uphold the safety of our students. Our staff are expected to sign a Code of Conduct each and every year. This Code of Conduct (and associated material) incorporate standards of behaviour that account for professional boundaries and child safety



imperatives. In 2019 we have also developed a Religious Worker's Agreement which provides the same accountabilities for our religious staff. Our Staff Code of Conduct is embedded in this document.

Our Staff *Culture* is incredibly important to us. We have a Christ-centred culture where students are loved and cared for, and where they feel safe. Our staff work with our parents to ensure our students achieve their God-given potential. College Leaders are held accountable for their child safety responsibilities. Our Staff members are encouraged to ensure that child safety is 'front of mind' at all times.

Inclusion is an important aspect of our operations. Individual differences are valued. Awareness programs are undertaken by staff members to ensure cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students are considered by teachers in their delivery methods and our teachers are provided with professional development activities which focus on equipping them to cater for students with special needs. Our Learning support department also supports students with special needs.

Our Human Resource Practices (including recruitment, induction, training, supervision and management) are designed to promote child safety and reduce the risk of child abuse. All new Job applicants are now given our Child Safety Code of Conduct when applying for employment. All short listed applicants are screened and commit to complying with the Child Safety Code of Conduct. Teaching staff members are required to maintain their VIT registration which incorporates police checks. Other staff are required to maintain current Working With Children Checks which incorporates relevant Police checks. All applicants are reminded in interviews about our Child Safety Code of Conduct. Staff members are trained with regard to their obligations as part of their induction.

Child Safety and our Students

The College has developed a large number of policies that relate to the Student Code of Conduct (ie our discipline framework). Over the course of the coming year, these documents will form a large part of our focus with our students. Outside of normal classes, this year we will be running a special curriculum that will look at issues relating to staying safe and that relate to student welfare issues. We have targeted external speakers who will come in to the College to run programs designed to improve the welfare and safety of our students. The first of these will be based on Mental Health First Aid (MHFA). As always, whenever issues relating to student welfare arise at the College we look to see whether we can use the context as a teaching moment with our students.



Child Safety and our Parents/Guardians

This year we will be consistently messaging our parents on the importance of the Child Safety measures we have been developing. The College’s Statement of Commitment to Child Safety will be incorporated into a new document which will identify key Child Safety issues and will present our Child Safety Policy as well as other policies that we deem to be a similar significance (ie this document). The College will strive to communicate the importance of parents signing in and out for events like College Assemblies. We will be looking to run major events like our Athletics Carnival in such a way as to ensure spectators and children are separated by physical barriers and all parent volunteers will be required to Working With Children Police Checks. We will be running at least one parent information session on child welfare issues.

As part of the Child Safe Standards, all organisations are required to publish their Statement of Commitment to Child Safety. Ours is published on our College website.

Child Safety and our Community

This year, for the first time in quite a while, the College has decided to run its Opening and Closing College Masses within the Parish Church on the weekend. Our reasoning is that we want to engage as many of our parents as possible at these critical College activities. Of course, running these sorts of events at the Parish on the weekend creates several Child Safety issues for us. As part of our risk management processes, we have identified key areas of risk and will set up our staffing of the



events around these risks. We see this as an opportunity to provide leadership to our broader parish community on how to ensure child safety at the daily masses held at the venue.

The College has made it part of its action plan for 2020 to look into the fencing of the College and improved security surveillance. One of the reasons for this is our commitment to child safety.

Over the course of any week there is a steady stream of volunteers and contractors making their way into and out of the College. The College has developed two new documents – our Volunteer’s Handbook and our Contractor’s Code of Conduct. Both documents map out acceptable and unacceptable behaviours on the part of our Volunteers and Contractors.

Reporting of Child Welfare Issues

The College has clear policies in place to govern the reporting of, and responses to, suspected child abuse. A Child Protection Officer is appointed by the College as the go to for parents, staff and students on issues relating to Child Safety. Where necessary, matters are reported to authorities without hesitation. The Executive Leadership Team monitors the College’s compliance with child safety procedures.

Risk Management and Assessment Processes

The College has an extensive program in place to to identify, remove or reduce the risks of child abuse. The College completes Risk Assessments regularly to continually identify and eliminate or reduce risks of child abuse or dangers to child welfare. We have processes in place to minimise virtual and online abuse including internet filtering programs and monitoring programs. The Executive Leadership Team monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the College’s Risk Management systems.

Equipping students in Child Safety

Staff are encouraged at all times to keep child safety at the forefront of our thinking. Students are educated on issues relating to accepted standards of behaviour, healthy and respectful relationships, resilience and child abuse over the course of each year. Age appropriate educational sessions are presented on the topic of

acceptable and unacceptable behaviours and protection strategies against unsafe persons and situations. Students are educated on how they are able to register any concerns relating to child safety issues.

Reporting Concerns

All members of the St Thomas Aquinas College community (including staff members, parents, students, volunteers, third party contractors and other people associated with the College environment) who have any concerns that a child may be subject to abuse are asked to contact a Child Protection Officer as soon as possible. It is the responsibility of our Child Protection Officer to ensure that appropriate action is taken.

Child Protection Officer

Mark Stanton 0418 989 161

Liz Alexander 0417 585 960

Communications will be treated confidentially. Information will only be passed on based on a 'need to know' basis. Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger, the Police should be called immediately on 000.

Other Documents

Alongside this document we have also posted the following documents for your information:

- The Employee Code of Conduct for Working With Children and Young People;
- Our Statement of Commitment to Child Safety; and
- Our PP416 Child Safety Policy and Procedure v2.1 (updated April 2019)