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ST THOMAS AQUINAS
COLLEGE

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PP416 CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is

1. To facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within St Thomas Aquinas College.
2. To work towards an organisational culture of child safety and wellbeing .
3. To prevent child abuse within St Thomas Aquinas College.
4. To ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs.
5. To provide guidance to staff/volunteers/contractors as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation.
6. To provide a clear statement to staff/volunteers/ contractors forbidding any such abuse.
7. To provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

SCOPE

St Thomas Aquinas College is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at St Thomas Aquinas College is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse. We have published a Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing which acts as a guiding document in terms of all stakeholder's interactions with children. Our Mission and Aims and Core Values will also reflect our commitment to child safety and wellbeing .

DEFINITIONS	
Child	A person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier
Child abuse	All forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial (e.g. for financial gain) or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a child
Child connected work	Work that is authorised by St Thomas Aquinas College that is performed by an adult in the St Thomas Aquinas College environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present
Child protection	Any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.
Child safety and wellbeing team	<p>The St Thomas Aquinas College Child Safety and Wellbeing Team is responsible for ensuring staff, students and parents all understand their roles in ensuring the organisation is child safe. The College Child Safety and Wellbeing Team comprises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * A College Board representative (ie the Board's nominated member) Father Elias P 03 5629 2500 E childsafestac@stac.vic.edu.au * The College Principal (current Fr Andrew Cranshaw) P 03 5629 2500 E principal@stac.vic.edu.au * The Student Welfare Representative (currently Mr Kieran O'Dwyer) P 03 5629 2500 E deputy.principal@stac.vic.edu.au * Child safety and wellbeing Officers Kieran O'Dwyer (see details above) Liz Alexander P 03 5629 2500 E liz.alexander@stac.vic.edu.au
Child sexual assault	Any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. This includes all sexually abusive behaviours and pornography of any kind. It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.

DEFINITIONS (Cont...)

<p>Reasonable grounds for belief</p>	<p>Belief based on reasonable grounds that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively assessed. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.</p> <p>A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The child is in need of protection, (b) The child has suffered or is likely to suffer “significant harm as a result of physical injury”, (c) The parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child. <p>A ‘reasonable belief’ or a ‘belief on reasonable grounds’ is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.</p> <p>A ‘reasonable belief’ is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a ‘reasonable belief’ might be formed if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A child states that they have been physically or sexually abused; b) A child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves); c) Someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused; d) Professional observations of the child’s behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused; and/or e) Signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.
<p>Student</p>	<p>An individual person who is formally enrolled to study at St Thomas Aquinas College. The individual person is that who appears on the enrolment documents and who is assigned a College student ID.</p>
<p>The School/College</p>	<p>St Thomas Aquinas College</p>

POLICY STATEMENT

1. St Thomas Aquinas College:
 - 1.1. is committed to child safety and wellbeing. We want children to be safe, happy and equipped. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the safety, participation and equipping of all students including any children in our care.
 - 1.2. has a zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our policies and procedures.
 - 1.3. has legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow.
 - 1.4. is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks.
 - 1.5. has human resources and recruitment practices in place to ensure child safety and wellbeing is at the forefront of any decisions made when recruiting staff and other volunteers.
 - 1.6. is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
 - 1.7. support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
 - 1.8. committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.
 - 1.9. has specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.
 - 1.10. actively works to listen to and equip children
 - 1.11. has systems to protect children from abuse, and will take all allegations and concerns very seriously and responds to them consistently in line with the organisation's policies and procedures
 - 1.12. is committed to promoting physical, emotional and cultural safety for all children
 - 1.13. is committed to providing a safe environment for all children
 - 1.14. is committed to reviewing its child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures to ensure they are appropriate and in keeping with the legal requirements of the State and Commonwealth Governments.
2. This policy ensures that the College develops, and embeds into practice, a culture of child safety and wellbeing in accordance with the Child Safe Standards.
3. This policy should be read in conjunction with all documents in Section 4 (Student Welfare and Discipline) of the College Policy Framework.
4. This policy should also be read in conjunction with policies in Section 5 (Staff) of the College Policy Framework – particularly policies relating to staff recruitment, staff induction and staff professional development.

PROCEDURES

1. Towards Embedding an Organisational Culture of Child Safety and Wellbeing

Develop strategies to embed a culture of child safety and wellbeing at the College

1.1. St Thomas Aquinas College are committed to providing an organisational culture in which the safety and welfare of students is at the forefront of what we do. St Thomas Aquinas College have developed the following strategies to help embed this culture:

1.1.1. St Thomas Aquinas College will develop a range of strategies in order to embed the culture of child safety and wellbeing and student welfare amongst the staff of the College. This includes:

1.1.1.1. Developing, distributing and promoting a St Thomas Aquinas College Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing document (see the College Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing).

1.1.1.2. Developing, distributing and educating staff on the Duty of Care Policy (and related procedures) to ensure all staff understand their roles in keeping students safe and for monitoring the welfare of our students (see STAC Duty of Care Policy and Procedures).

1.1.1.3. Developing, distributing and educating staff on the Staff Code of Conduct (see St Thomas Aquinas College Staff Code of Conduct (and other Codes of Conduct) which outlines our expectations in terms of how we expect our staff to conduct themselves around students. This supplements the VIT Professional Code of Conduct which outlines the profession's requirements in terms of a teacher's conduct while conducting their professional responsibilities. All staff and volunteers will be required to sign this Code of Conduct.

St Thomas Aquinas College will develop a document and education program aimed at helping staff to identify students at risk (see *Department of Education and Training (2016), Child Safety and Wellbeing Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove the risks of child abuse*)

1.1.1.4. St Thomas Aquinas College will provide annual professional development to its staff on child safety and wellbeing issues, as well as making this a regular focus of staff meetings.

PROCEDURES (Cont...)

1. Towards Embedding an Organisational Culture of Child safety and wellbeing (Cont...)

1.1.2. St Thomas Aquinas College will develop a range of strategies in order to embed the culture of child safety and wellbeing amongst the students of the College. This includes:

1.1.2.1. Developing and distributing a Student Code of Conduct (see The College Student Code of Conduct/Rules) which outlines our expectations in terms of how we expect our students to conduct themselves around other students. All students will be expected to sign this Student Code of Conduct.

1.1.2.2. St Thomas Aquinas College will develop strategies to help educate students on identifying and reducing the risks to child safety and wellbeing (see Department of Education and Training (2016), Child Safety and Wellbeing Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove the risks of child abuse)

1.1.2.3. St Thomas Aquinas College is committed to the ongoing monitoring of issues arising within the student cohort and the development of education programs for students aimed at educating students on aspects of child safety and wellbeing.

1.1.2.4. St Thomas Aquinas College will provide information – in the form of posters, pamphlets and other materials – designed to educate students on issues relating to child safety and wellbeing.

1.1.3. St Thomas Aquinas College will develop a range of strategies in order to embed the culture of child safety and wellbeing amongst the parents/guardians of the College. This includes:

1.1.3.1. Distributing the Student Code of Conduct (see The College Student Code of Conduct/Rules) to our parents/guardians together with frequent updates on our expectations in terms of how we expect our students to conduct themselves around other students.

1.1.3.2. Developing and distributing the College Statement of Commitment to Child safety and wellbeing to our parents/guardians.

1.1.3.3. Communicating education programs conducted with students to parents/guardians through the College website and/or College Newsletter.

1.1.3.4. As we grow and bring in more local students, conducting periodic parent/guardian workshops on issues relating to child safety and wellbeing.

1.1.3.5. St Thomas Aquinas College will develop a range of strategies designed to encourage and promote the reporting of child safety and wellbeing issues to relevant levels of management within the organisation.

PROCEDURES (Cont...)

1. Towards Embedding an Organisational Culture of Child Safety and Wellbeing (Cont...)

Allocate Roles and Responsibilities for achieving these strategies

The Board of the College will

- Authorise all policies relating to child protection and student welfare
- Ensure a culture of child safety and wellbeing is developed at St Thomas Aquinas College
- Ensure a Child Safety and Wellbeing Team is in place for the College (see page 2)
- Ensure the existence of a Child Safety and Wellbeing Team is promoted across the College Community
- Receive reports from the Principal, the Deputy Principal and other staff on issues relating to child safety and wellbeing on a regular basis
- Ensure strategies are developed both reactively and proactively to ensure the safety and welfare of students
- Include relevant responsibilities that arise from this policy and its related procedures in Position Descriptions for Board members and the Principal and ensure the Principal includes relevant responsibilities in relevant school level positions (eg Teacher Position Description)

The Principal will

- Oversee the implementation of this policy/procedure
- Appoint designated staff members with responsibility for the welfare and safety requirements of students
- Update staff on the welfare and safety requirements of all students.
- Ensure College-based roles and responsibilities for child safety and wellbeing are known and understood across the College community.
- Regularly making sure students, College staff, and members of the College community know who to contact if they have a concern about child safety and wellbeing in the College.
- Making sure the Child Safety and Wellbeing Team contact information is kept up to date, and is accessible to all.
- Provide support for Deans of sub-School
- Authorise actions required to ensure compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Standards articulated in Ministerial Order 870.
- Promote a culture of awareness of the importance of child safety and wellbeing matters amongst staff and students through professional development activities and parent information sessions
- Include relevant responsibilities in Position Descriptions for certain roles (such as the Deputy Principal position description) and ensure there is a statement in all position descriptions that relates to each individual's responsibilities in terms of Child Safe Standards.
- Ensure the provision of ongoing induction and training for all staff and volunteers in child safety and wellbeing including how to recognise and respond to child abuse.

PROCEDURES (Cont...)

1. Towards Embedding an Organisational Culture of Child Safety and Wellbeing (Cont...)

Allocate Roles and Responsibilities for achieving these strategies (Cont...)

The Deputy Principal will:

- Stay up-to-date on issues relating to child safety and wellbeing
- Work with students to ensure the safety and welfare of all
- Bring issues to the attention of the Principal
- Prepare regular reports for the College Executive Team on the issues presenting themselves within the student body
- Liaise with the parents/guardians of the College to ensure they understand safety and wellbeing issues
- Provide professional development for staff on issues relating to child safety and wellbeing
- Provide training for students on issues relating to child safety and wellbeing

Allocate Roles and Responsibilities for achieving these strategies (Cont...)

Staff (Teaching and non-Teaching) will:

- Stay up-to-date on issues relating to child safety and wellbeing
- Ensure they are aware of the College's policies and procedures in this area and that they are aware of the Duty of Care and Code of Conduct documents provided by the College
- Ensure their professional obligations are discharged in a manner consistent with the strategies developed by the College and in keeping with the intent of the Standards, Regulations and Laws of the State and Commonwealth of Australia.

Students will:

- Ensure their actions are in line with the College's Code of Conduct
- Ensure their actions at no time endanger other students, staff or members of the St Thomas Aquinas College or the broader community

Inform the College Community about the strategies and allocated roles and responsibilities:

The College's communications about the child safety and wellbeing strategies will:

- identify key people involved in child safety and wellbeing and their roles
- cover the roles of all people in the College community who are responsible for child safety and wellbeing and the role of others in terms of how this can impact on student safety (eg sport coaches)
- cover the range of College environments to which this policy and its related procedures apply (e.g. camps, online)
- use a mix of communication tools (verbal, online, print).
- provide opportunities for staff, students, parents and the College community to engage with child safety and wellbeing (e.g. through staff meetings, student assemblies, parent information forums).

PROCEDURES (Cont...)

1. Towards Embedding an Organisational Culture of Child Safety and Wellbeing (Cont...)

Put the strategies into practice, and inform the College community about these practices

The College will:

- Identify and develop child safety and wellbeing champions – ie one or more roles in the College with the responsibility to promote, monitor and/or report on the implementation of the College's child safety and wellbeing strategies (with appropriate leadership support). In the initial case, this will be members of Deans of School Committee but will diversify to include other senior management roles if they become active.
- Report progress to the College governing authority. The Principal is required to regularly report on child safety and wellbeing matters in their report to the Board.
- Provide ongoing opportunities for staff, students, parents and the College community to engage with child safety and wellbeing issues (e.g. through staff meetings, student assemblies, parent information forums).

Periodically Review the effectiveness of the strategies put into practice and, if considered appropriate, revise those strategies

The College will:

- Proactively plan the College's approach to review, including the role of the Board. Child safety and wellbeing will be a standing item at St Thomas Aquinas College Board meetings, and at St Thomas Aquinas College Executive Team meetings.
- Consult with staff, and the wider College community to inform strategic decisions about child safety and wellbeing. This includes incorporating child safety and wellbeing issues into annual surveys.
- Consider continuous improvement opportunities such as incorporating child safety and wellbeing questions into annual and twice annual surveys to measure awareness and confidence in the College's approach.
- Conduct a review after a potential risk or report occurs in the College.
- Communicate the outcomes of any and all reviews to the College Community. This may be in the form of a direct communication, or through a change in structure, responsibility, communication process or some other aspect of our child safety and wellbeing procedures coming from a report.

PROCEDURES (Cont...)

2. Development and Maintenance of a Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing

2.1 Development and maintenance of child safe policies and procedures

2.1.1. St Thomas Aquinas College will develop and adequately review and maintain a Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this Policy) and related Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing.

2.2 These documents will form the basis of our practices to ensure Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing and they will guide our staff, student and parent/community education programs.

2.2.1 St Thomas Aquinas College will develop leadership practices that make child safety and wellbeing issues a regular part of Agenda items for leadership meetings and general staff meetings.

2.2.2 St Thomas Aquinas College will maintain a comprehensive student management system that ensures documentation is appropriately recorded and accessible to senior management and the Child Safety and Wellbeing Officer.

2.3 Responsibilities

2.3.1 The Principal and College Board are responsible for developing strategies that embed an organisational culture of child safety and wellbeing at St Thomas Aquinas College. These strategies will give the highest priority to the promotion and protection of a child's safety, health, development, education and wellbeing.

2.3.2 The College Board will monitor the College's adherence to this policy through its Board meeting and sub-committee processes and from regular reports by College staff, including the Principal and the Child Safety and Wellbeing Officer.

2.3.3 The Principal is also responsible for compliance monitoring through a dedicated risk management team who will ensure and report on compliance and implementation of our Child Safety and Wellbeing policies and procedures.

2.3.4 We are committed to the safety, participation and equipping of all children. We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures. Our policies and procedures will provide the name and conduct details of staff who have specific responsibilities in relation to child safety and wellbeing and who may receive reports of suspicion of child abuse. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

2.3.5 We are committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks. St Thomas Aquinas College has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers. We are committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the emotional, physical and cultural safety of all children and to providing a safe environment for their learning. We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

PROCEDURES (Cont...)

2. Development and Maintenance of a Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing

2.4 Reviewing

- 2.4.1 Every two years, and following every reportable incident, a review shall be conducted to assess whether the College's child protection policies or procedures require modification to better protect the children under the College's care.
- 2.4.2 The Board of St Thomas Aquinas College will seek regular feedback on issues relating to child safety and wellbeing. Where issues are addressed, the Board will ensure adequate strategies are put in place to respond to the issue.

How the College will support, encourage and enable College staff, parents and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety and wellbeing matters.

The College will support, encourage and enable College staff, parents and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety and wellbeing matters by:

- Using the promotion techniques identified in the section above
- Keeping child safety and wellbeing issues at the forefront of the agenda for staff meetings, student assemblies and parent information sessions
- Publishing communication channels facilitating the reporting of child safety and wellbeing issues
- Using surveys to gather intelligence on the understandings of staff, students and parents regarding our Child Safety and Wellbeing policies and procedures

PROCEDURES (Cont...)

2. Development and Maintenance of a Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing

How the College will demonstrate its commitment to child safety and wellbeing and monitor the College's adherence to its Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy or Statement of Commitment

The College's Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing is enshrined in three key documents:

- PP416 Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedure
- DOC41601 Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing

All documents and all promotional material relating to Child Safety and Wellbeing will be published:

- On the College's intranet site
- Extracts will be published in the Student Diary
- Details will be published in College Newsletters throughout the year
- Copies will be distributed during the initial Parent Information Evening
- Newsletter and other forums will be used to update and remind the community about Child Safety and Wellbeing matters
- Staff Meetings will be used to keep staff informed
- Student Assemblies will be used to educate students and to include the student voice
- The College is committed to using whatever means possible to update its community

On a regular basis, the following strategies will be applied to ensure the College is adhering to its Child Safety and Wellbeing Policies and Commitment:

- The Board will keep Child Safety and Wellbeing as a regular Agenda item
- The Board will expect regular updates from the College Executive Team
- The College Executive Team will keep Child Safety and Wellbeing as a regular Agenda item
- Feedback mechanisms will be built into the continuous improvement cycle ensuring feedback is received about the College's adherence to the commitment and policies, about the quality of the material, and about the promotion of the materials.
- Whenever a report is made in accordance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Standards at St Thomas Aquinas College, the Statement of Commitment, Policies and other related documents and procedures will be reviewed and analysed.

PROCEDURES (Cont...)

2. Development and Maintenance of a Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing (Cont...)

How the College will support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse

We are committed to assisting children (or staff, parents or other significant adults) who disclose child abuse, or who are otherwise linked to child abuse by:

- Providing welfare services for students to assist them in times of need and who can guide them through the disclosure process and who can aid them and support them beyond
- Using the reporting processes outlined in point 5 (below) to help students disclose child abuse and report it;
- Keeping a register of child abuse issues and analysing possible links to other students who may be affected
- Using external services to assist students as required
- Using any other means necessary to support the student.

The College Governing authority must inform the College community about the policy or statement, and make the policy or statement publicly available:

These requirements will be achieved by

- Publishing the documents on the College's website
- Publishing extracts (as suggested by the College Executive Team) in the Student Diary
- Publishing information in College Newsletters throughout the year
- Ensuring copies of key documents (eg the commitment and posters) are posted around the College
- Ensuring copies are distributed during the initial Parent Information Evening
- Ensuring information is posted in Newsletters and other forums to update and remind the community about Child Safety and Wellbeing matters (including using the Board Chair's voice)
- Ensuring minutes from Staff Meetings are cited proving Child Safety and Wellbeing has been on the staff agenda
- Requesting timelines and information on when students are consulted about child safety and wellbeing matters (eg Assembly timelines)
- Ensuring whatever other means that are relevant are utilised

PROCEDURES (Cont...)

3. Development and Maintenance of suitable Codes of Conduct for Staff, Contractors, Volunteers and Students

- 3.1 Development and maintenance of relevant codes of conduct
- 3.1.1 St Thomas Aquinas College will develop and adequately review and maintain a College Staff Code of Conduct. This Code of Conduct will provide clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children. The Code of Conduct will supplement the VIT Code of Professional Conduct (for our teaching staff), other professional requirements (eg for Psychologists and Nurses) and will provide guidance to staff on how the College intends to manage reports and suspicions.
 - 3.1.2 St Thomas Aquinas College will develop and adequately review and maintain a College Student Code of Conduct/Rules which will outline our expectations of students in terms of appropriate behaviour with each other and with the staff of St Thomas Aquinas College.
 - 3.1.3 St Thomas Aquinas College will develop and adequately review and maintain a College Code of Conduct for Volunteers and Contractors. These Codes of Conduct will provide clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.
 - 3.1.4 St Thomas Aquinas College will communicate its Staff Code of Conduct to staff and its Students Code of Conduct to students. Both will be made readily available to relevant groups (eg the Student Code of Conduct will be placed in the Student Diary). Volunteers and Contractors will be taken through their Codes of Conduct during induction sessions. A visitors Code of Conduct will be published and provided both in the visitor's sign in book and near Main Reception.
 - 3.1.4 St Thomas Aquinas College will require all staff, students, volunteers and contractors to sign off on the relevant Code of Conduct.
 - 3.1.5 The St Thomas Aquinas College Code of Conduct will be a focus of all new staff Induction programs and of the Student Orientation and induction process.
 - 3.1.6 The St Thomas Aquinas College Code of Conduct will be made available to any prospective employees as part of our recruitment process.
 - 3.1.7 The St Thomas Aquinas College Code of Conduct will be the subject of a staff meeting/professional development session at the start of each College year. Staff will contribute to the construction of the Code of Conduct and will be expected to sign off on the Code of Conduct each and every year. When new staff enter the College outside of this timeframe, the signing of the Code of Conduct will be built into Induction processes.

PROCEDURES (Cont...)

4. Development of Recruitment, Supervision and Training Strategies that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel

4.1 Recruitment and screening strategies

- 4.1.1 St Thomas Aquinas College will develop and adequately review and maintain its College Staff Recruitment and Retention Policy and Procedures.
- 4.1.2 As part of this Policy, St Thomas Aquinas College undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all workers and volunteers which aims to:
 - 4.1.2.1 Promote and protect the safety of all children under the care of the organisation;
 - 4.1.2.2 Identify the safest and most suitable people who share the College's values and commitment to protect children; and
 - 4.1.2.3 Prevent a person from working at the College if they pose a risk to children.
- 4.1.3 St Thomas Aquinas College requires all workers/ volunteers to pass through the organisation's recruitment and screening processes prior to commencing their engagement with St Thomas Aquinas College. This includes various assessment, recruitment and selection tools to identify risks such as checking VIT registration status, checking WWCC status, checking references, identification of 'holes' in resumes and interrogation of what happened during that time and direct questioning on a prospective employee's views and practices in relation to Child Safety and Wellbeing.

Persons applying for a role as a teacher with the St Thomas Aquinas College must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching. St Thomas Aquinas College's approach to teachers will be to insist they have Permission to Teach (PTT) status with VIT if they are not eligible for VIT's teacher registration.
- 4.1.4 St Thomas Aquinas College will require applicants to provide a police check in accordance with the law and as appropriate, before they commence working at St Thomas Aquinas College and during their time with the College at regular intervals.
- 4.1.5 St Thomas Aquinas College will undertake thorough reference checks as per the approved internal procedure. Once engaged, workers/volunteers must review and acknowledge their understanding of this Policy.
- 4.1.6 In accordance with our St Thomas Aquinas College's Staff Recruitment and Retention Policy and Procedures, Child Safety and Wellbeing Statements will be included in all recruitment literature.

4.2 Staff (and volunteer) induction and training

- 4.2.1 St Thomas Aquinas College will develop and adequately review and maintain its College Staff Induction and Professional Development Policy and Procedures.
- 4.2.2 This policy will outline various strategies to be used to induct staff into our policies and procedures and our Code of Conduct, and to ensure ongoing professional development in this area. The role of induction and professional development activities will be to manage and/or reduce the risk of child abuse by new or existing personnel.

PROCEDURES (Cont...)

5. Development of Processes to Manage the Risk of Child Abuse and respond to and report suspected Child Abuse

5.1 Reporting

5.1.1 Any staff member, volunteer or contractor who has grounds to suspect abusive activity must immediately notify the appropriate child protection service or the police. They should also advise the Principal or Child Safety and Wellbeing Officer about their concern. In situations where the Principal and Child Safety and Wellbeing Officer are suspected of involvement in the activity, or if the person having the suspicion does not believe that the matter is being appropriately addressed or dealt with, the matter should be reported to the College Board.

5.2 Mandatory Reporting

5.2.1 The Principal and/or the Child Safety and Wellbeing Officer must report complaints of suspected abusive behaviour or misconduct to the Board of St Thomas Aquinas College and also to any external regulatory body such as the police. Victoria's Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) stipulates mandatory reporting requirements for Principals, teachers or persons with a PTT must make a report if:

5.2.1.1 They form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child (defined as being under 17 years old) is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse;

5.2.1.2 The parents cannot or will not protect the child; and

5.2.1.3 The belief is formed in the course of practising his/her position of employment. NB: exceptions may apply.

5.2.2 The Crimes Act (1958) requires any adult to make a report if they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child (under 16 years of age) by another person of or over the age of 18 years. NB: exceptions may apply.

5.3 Voluntary Reporting

5.3.1 According to the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (VIC) a voluntary reporter may make a report if the person has a significant concern for the wellbeing of a child (under 17 years of age).

5.3.2 Reports should be made in accordance with the College's Child Safety and Wellbeing – Response and Reporting Procedure.

PROCEDURES (Cont...)

5. Development of Processes to Manage the Risk of Child Abuse and respond to and report suspected Child Abuse (Cont...)

5.4 Investigating

- 5.4.1 If the appropriate child protection service or the police decide to conduct an investigation of this report, all employees, contractors or volunteers must cooperate fully with the investigation.
- 5.4.2 Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, the Principal will consult with the authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate. If it is decided that such an investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the Principal may decide to conduct such an investigation. All employees, contractors and volunteers must cooperate fully with the investigation. Any such investigation will be conducted according to the rules of natural justice.
- 5.4.3 The Principal will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time-to-time other members of staff may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.
- 5.4.4 After an initial review and a determination that the suspected abuse warrants additional investigation, the Principal shall coordinate the investigation with the appropriate investigators and / or law enforcement officials. Internal or external legal representatives will be involved in the process, as deemed appropriate.

5.5 Responding

- 5.5.1 If it is alleged that a member of staff, contractor or a volunteer may have committed an offence or have breached the organisation's policies or its Code of Conduct the person concerned may be stood down (with pay, where applicable) while an investigation is conducted.
- 5.5.2 If the investigation concludes that on the balance of probabilities an offence (or a breach of the organisation's policies or Code of Conduct) has occurred then disciplinary action may follow, up to and including dismissal or cessation of involvement with the organisation. The findings of the investigation will also be reported to any external body as required.
- 5.5.3 If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

5.6 Privacy

- 5.6.1 All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. St Thomas Aquinas College will have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how the personal information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will be able to access it.

PROCEDURES (Cont...)

6. Development of Strategies to Identify and Reduce/Remove the Risk of Child Abuse

6.1 Risk management

- 6.1.1 St Thomas Aquinas College will ensure that child safety and wellbeing is a part of its overall risk management approach. St Thomas Aquinas College will have a Risk Management Team committed to identifying and managing risks at the College (see the College Risk Management Policies and Procedures). The Risk Management Team members will receive regular training in relation to child safety and wellbeing.
- 6.1.2 St Thomas Aquinas College risk management strategies will take account of our physical and online environments (ie as they are developed). See DOC41604 the College Risk Assessment Matrix for more information.
- 6.1.3 St Thomas Aquinas College risk management strategies will apply to interactions with external contractors engaged as part of, eg, excursions.
- 6.1.4 St Thomas Aquinas College staff meetings will always provide opportunities for staff to raise concerns about students who are deemed to have 'changed behaviour' over a period of time, or who are a concern to the staff of the College.
- 6.1.5 St Thomas Aquinas College will apply a range of strategies (see section 1 of the Procedures section of this Policy) and education strategies (see Sections 4 and 7) to reduce, remove or mitigate the risk of child abuse occurring.
- 6.1.6 Where St Thomas Aquinas College (through its Board) identifies a risk of child abuse occurring in one or more environments, the Board and College will make a record of the risk. Actions to correct the risk factor will be determined and recorded. These actions will then be implemented in a timely manner to reduce or remove the risk so that it does not lead to an instance of child abuse. The nature of the actions implemented will be dependent on the risk factor identified.
- 6.1.7 St Thomas Aquinas College's Risk Management strategy and associated Matrix will be monitored over the course of the year. The College Executive Team will reflect on operational realities and determine whether operational environments of the College are adequately reflected within the Risk Management Strategy. The Risk Management matrix and broader process will be reviewed by the Board every six months. Where instances of child abuse occur, the risk factor will be identified and issues with the risk management strategy will be identified and corrected as part of this procedure.
- 6.1.8 Where risk controls are found to be ineffective or irrelevant, they will be reviewed and modified to more realistically reflect the operational environment of the College.

PROCEDURES (Cont...)

6. Development of Strategies to Identify and Reduce/Remove the Risk of Child Abuse (Cont...)

6.2 Training and supervision

6.2.1 Training and education is important to ensure that everyone at St Thomas Aquinas College understands that child safety and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility. Our organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety and wellbeing concerns. We train our staff to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

6.2.2 New employees and volunteers are briefed on commencement and provided with information to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and wellbeing and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to the St Thomas Aquinas College's Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further).

6.2.3 Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

6.3 Support for the child

6.3.1 St Thomas Aquinas College will also ensure that appropriate assistance and support is provided to any child who discloses child abuse or is linked in any way to suspected child abuse.

6.4 Guidance and Education of Board Members

6.4.1 The Chair of the Board of St Thomas Aquinas College will ensure that each Board member has adequate and timely professional development about:

6.4.1.1 Individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse;

6.4.1.2 Child abuse risks in the College environment; and

6.4.1.3 The current Child Safe Standards and the College's policies and procedures in terms of this.

6.4.2 This professional development will occur formally during one of the designated Board Meetings held during the year and is to be calendarised at the start of the year. All Board members should be made aware of the date and time of all Board Meetings including this specific one.

6.4.3 The Board is to make Child Safety and Wellbeing a standing item enabling informal and frequent professional development opportunities for Board members in the area of the nature of child abuse and the College's response to the possible risk factors involved.

6.4.4 The Principal will monitor professional writings in the area of Child Safety and Wellbeing and where resources become available from the Department of Education, the VRQA or Independent Schools Victoria, these relevant resources will be sent on to Board members and will be a subject of conversation during the next Board Meeting.

PROCEDURES (Cont...)

6. Development of Strategies to Identify and Reduce/Remove the Risk of Child Abuse (Cont...)

- 6.5 Guidance and Education of St Thomas Aquinas College Staff
 - 6.5.1 The Principal of St Thomas Aquinas College will ensure that each staff member has adequate and timely professional development about:
 - 6.4.1.1 Individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse;
 - 6.4.1.2 Child abuse risks in the College environment; and
 - 6.4.1.3 The current Child Safe Standards and the College's policies and procedures in terms of this.
 - 6.5.2 This professional development will occur formally in one of the start of year professional development sessions held at the start of the year and is to be calendarised at the start of the year. It will also occur in various Staff Meetings held throughout the year and must be done no less than three times a year. The Principal must report the professional development plan associated with the Child Safe Standard to the Chair of the Board early in the College year and must forward any materials covered. All Staff members should be made aware of the date and time of all professional development activities including this specific one.
 - 6.5.3 The College Executive Team is to make Child Safety and Wellbeing a standing item at several Staff Meeting events enabling informal and frequent professional development opportunities for staff members in the area of the nature of child abuse and the College's response to the possible risk factors involved.
 - 6.5.4 The Principal will monitor professional writings in the area of Child Safety and Wellbeing and where resources become available from the Department of Education, the VRQA or Independent Schools Victoria, these relevant resources will be sent on to staff members and will be a subject of conversation during subsequent Staff Meetings.
 - 6.5.5 All of the above activities must be reported to the Board during appropriate Board Meetings.

PROCEDURES (Cont...)

7. Development of Processes to Manage the Risk of Child Abuse and respond to and report suspected Child Abuse

7.1 Promoting the participation and empowerment of children

- 7.1.1 St Thomas Aquinas College aims to provide an environment in which all children feel safe and comfortable and in which they feel they have someone in whom they can trust a report about child abuse.
- 7.1.2 St Thomas Aquinas College will provide regular education sessions for its students on various elements relating to identification of child abuse, reducing or removing the risk of child abuse, reporting child abuse.
- 7.1.3 The Child Safety and Wellbeing Officer (ie the Student Welfare Officer) is a point of contact for all staff and students to report their concerns.
- 7.1.4 Throughout the College Year various opportunities will be provided for students to contribute to the child safe policies of St Thomas Aquinas College.
- 7.1.5 St Thomas Aquinas College will publish the Student Code of Conduct in a place where all students have access to it (e.g. the Student Diary from 2020).
- 7.1.6 St Thomas Aquinas College will strive to update the broader College Community on issues relating to children's rights and cultural safety.

7.2 Standards of Behaviour for students attending St Thomas Aquinas College

- 7.2.1 In the first instance, St Thomas Aquinas College has established its PP401 Student Engagement Policy and Procedures V2.1 which incorporates the acceptable Standards of Behaviour of the College.
- 7.2.2 Staff, Students and Parents will be engaged in the establishment of these standards in the manner outlined on page 8 of the document.
- 7.2.3 Students will be encouraged to speak up and be heard regarding the construction and implementation of Standards of Behaviour within the College. This will occur in several ways:
 - All students will be encouraged to provide written feedback on the policy and related procedures.
 - Student leadership groups will be established and used to gather verbal feedback
 - Student adherence to the standards will also be monitored and will be the subject of subsequent discussions with students (eg in assemblies).
- 7.2.4 These standards will be promoted across the College community by being posted in key areas of the College and in the Student Diary.
- 7.2.5 The Student Engagement Policy will be regularly reviewed (ie annually).

PROCEDURES (Cont...)

7. Development of Processes to Manage the Risk of Child Abuse and respond to and report suspected Child Abuse (Cont...)

7.3 Resilience, Healthy and Respectful Relationships (including the Catholic Church's teaching on chastity)

7.3.1 The St Thomas Aquinas College Board has decided the College will cover through its Religion curriculum Resilience, Healthy, Respectful Relationships and chastity.

7.3.2 The purposes of these programs is to:

Promote social and emotional learning which is a critical part of school education. Research shows:

- equipping students with the skills to build positive relationships and communicate respectfully is essential preparation for productive and healthy adult lives
- building resilience (the ability to cope and thrive in the face of negative events, challenges or adversity) has a positive impact on both social and academic outcomes, and is particularly critical for students who may be impacted by abuse
- students who are well informed about the sexuality are more likely to make positive and informed decisions and less likely to place themselves at risk in adolescence.

7.3.3 This program will be delivered during the length of the academic year through the whole school Religion Curriculum program.

7.3.4 The program will be evaluated each Year (minimum) to ensure it is delivering material that is suitable for the students in all Year Levels.

7.3.5 Student feedback into the nature and relevance of the curriculum will be gathered on an ongoing basis and will be built into the program where possible.

7.3.6 Parents and carers will also be included in the program through the use of one Parent Information Session per year and through feedback mechanisms such as surveys and invites to send emails posted in the College Newsletter.

7.3.7 Where possible, the College will release staff taking these sessions to attend professional development sessions that will assist them in conducting the sessions with the students and in also providing timely and relevant information to our community of parents and carers.

PROCEDURES (Cont...)

7. Development of Processes to Manage the Risk of Child Abuse and respond to and report suspected Child Abuse (Cont...)

7.4 Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention

- 7.4.1 St Thomas Aquinas College will deliver child abuse awareness and prevention education to its staff, students and parents.
- 7.4.2 St Thomas Aquinas College staff and volunteers will undertake training in identifying Child Abuse, mandatory reporting, reporting to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse (this will in part be covered using the Four Critical Actions professional development material available online). This professional development will occur formally in one of the start of year professional development sessions. A minimum of two other professional development sessions will be drawn on throughout the year. Staff Meetings will also be used to draw out understandings and provide relevant information.
- 7.4.3 The College will draw on evidence-based materials to deliver child abuse awareness and prevention education to build student capacity to:
- identify when they feel safe and unsafe and when they are at risk
 - identify safe and unsafe physical contact
 - promote their personal safety (avoiding harm where possible)
 - seek help, using their identified safety networks
 - overcome barriers to disclosure (e.g. guilt or disbelief)?
- 7.4.4 The effectiveness of training provided to students will be evaluated on an ongoing basis and changes to the program will be made as required.
- 7.4.5 Professional Development to parents will also be provided at a designated parent information session while updates and further information will be provided throughout the year.

7.5 Promotion of Child Safety and Wellbeing Standards

- 7.5.1 St Thomas Aquinas College is committed to promoting Child Safety and Wellbeing Standards relating to this order in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand and user-friendly to children. This will be achieved in the following ways:
- Materials for staff will be fairly extensive. Where volunteers require assistance, a more simplistic form of the documents will be provided.
 - Materials for parents will also be fairly extensive, but wherever possible the College will endeavour to provide the material in translated form or in other forms.
 - Materials for students will be more simplistic and will cater to the needs of the students.
 - For students and parents, the use of tables and graphic images will assist us in delivering the required messages.
 - Materials will be available on the staff intranet, the parent portal, the student portal and on the website.
 - The nature of materials used will be evaluated each year, and this will be one of the subjects of surveys conducted.
 - The effectiveness of materials used will be evaluated each year. Where materials are deemed to be ineffective, they will be re-drafted to (hopefully) improve them.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

There are a variety of Policies to which this Policy relates.

- Department of Education and Training (2016), Child Safe Standard 4: College staff selection, supervision and management practices for a child safe environment
- Department of Education and Training (2016), Child safety and wellbeing Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove the risks of child abuse
- Department of Education and Training (2016), PROTECT Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools
- Learning Support Policy and Procedure
- Incident Policy and Procedure
- Student Handbook
- To Identify and Reduce the Risks for Students (Staff) Fact Sheet
- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (2016), Child Safety and Wellbeing Standard 6: Child safety and wellbeing risk management strategies

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

- Education, Training and Reform Act (2006)
- Betrayal of Trust report
- Ministerial Order 870
- Children, Youth and Families Act (2005)
- Crimes Act (1958)
- Victorian Institute of Teaching Act (2001)

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board of the College

- Authorise all policies relating to child protection and student welfare
- Will ensure a culture of Child Safety and Wellbeing is developed at St Thomas Aquinas College
- Receive reports from the Principal, the Deputy Principal (ie in this sense the Student Welfare Officer) and other staff on issues relating to child safety and wellbeing on a regular basis
- Ensure strategies are developed both reactively and proactively to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students

The Principal is responsible for

- ensuring the implementation of this policy/procedure
- appointing a designated staff members with responsibility for the wellbeing and safety requirements of students
- updating staff on the wellbeing and safety requirements of all students
- Authorising actions required to ensure compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Standards articulated in Ministerial Order 870.
- Promoting a culture of awareness of the importance of child safety and wellbeing matters amongst staff and students

The Deputy Principal is responsible for:

- Staying up-to-date on issues relating to child safety and wellbeing
- Working with students to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all
- Bringing issues to the attention of the Principal
- Preparing regular reports for the College Executive Team on the issues presenting themselves within the student body
- Liaising with the parent/guardians of the College to ensure they understand safety and wellbeing issues
- Providing professional development for staff on issues relating to child safety and wellbeing
- Providing training for students on issues relating to child safety and wellbeing

Staff are responsible for:

- Staying up-to-date on issues relating to child safety and wellbeing
- Ensuring they are aware of the College's policies and procedures in this area and that they are aware of the Duty of Care and Code of Conduct documents provided by the College
- Ensuring their professional obligations are discharged in a manner consistent with the strategies developed by the College and in keeping with the intent of the Standards, Regulations and Laws of the State and Commonwealth of Australia.

Students must:

- Ensure their actions are in line with the College's Code of Conduct
- Ensure their actions at no time endanger other students, staff or members of St Thomas Aquinas College or the broader community

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Principal will be responsible for ensuring that this policy and procedure is monitored and evaluated throughout the College.

VERSION

Authorised by	St Thomas Aquinas College Board
Effective date	June 2021
Version	2.2
Review date	June 2023

APPENDIX A: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (CURRENT) FOR 2020

Approx Date	Task	Done?
January 2020	Go over Child Safe Standards with Staff	✓
January 2020	Work on Code of Conduct with staff	✓
Early Feb 2020	Newsletter piece on CSS (mid March 2020)	✓
Mid-Feb 2020	Final Date for Staff Feedback on Staff Code of Conduct	✓
March 2020	Year 7-12 Assembly – The CS standards	✓
March 2020	Primary Assembly – The CS standards	✓
March 2020	Staff Meeting – Looking at re-drafted Code of Conduct	✓
March 2020	Report to Board on progress	✓
End of March 2020	Updated documents based on Feedback uploaded to website	✓
April 2020	Staff Meeting – CSS re-visited – clubs, societies and after-school activities	✓
End of April 2020	Student Leader Session – gathering feedback/input	✓
Parent Forum May 2020	DP speaking about standards/issues with parents [TBC]	✓
May 2020	Feedback from students, parents on Standards due	✓
End of May 2020	Re-Draft of key documents relating to students/parents	✓
End of May 2020	Report to Board on progress/issues	✓
June 2020	Student Leader Session – gathering feedback/input	✓
July 2020	New Staff, Student Induction programs incorporating CSS @ STAC	✓
July 2020	Staff Session – Revisiting the Standards	✓
July 2020	Student Feedback Sessions (Primary and Secondary)	✓
July or August 2020	Newsletter piece on CSS	✓
September 2020	Re-Post CSS Materials around College and on website	✓
End of September 2020	Report to Board on progress/issues Risk Assessment Meeting on CSS	✓
October 2020	Student Leader Session – gathering feedback/input	✓
November 2020	Parent Information Sessions for new parents (included in these)	✓
November/December 2020	Surveys to students, parents and staff incorporating CSS @ STAC	✓
December 2020	Whole Staff Meeting dedicated to CSS, reviewing, way forward	✓
December 2020	Report to Board on progress/issues/Feedback	✓

This Implementation Schedule is to be updated every year.