

St. Catherine's Early Education Centre  
**CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY**

Effective Date: February 2026

Review Date: February 2028

**Policy Code:** CS-01

**Version:** 2026-V1

**Applies to:** Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Responsible Persons, Educators, Staff, Volunteers, Students, Contractors and Visitors

## 1. PURPOSE

St Catherine's Early Education Centre is committed to being a child safe organisation where the safety, wellbeing and rights of children are paramount.

This policy outlines how the service:

- Complies with the Victorian Child Safe Standards (Ministerial Order 1359)
- Complies with the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations
- Embeds child safety into governance, leadership and daily practice
- Prevents, identifies and responds to risks of child abuse
- Promotes culturally safe and inclusive environments

Child safety is the paramount consideration in all decision-making.

## 2. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

This policy operates in accordance with:

- Education and Care Services National Law & Regulations
  - Reg 84, 97, 103–115, 155, 165–170, 168(2)(h), 168(2)(ha)
- Ministerial Order 1359 (Victorian Child Safe Standards 2022)
- Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005

- Working with Children Act 2005
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
- Failure to Disclose / Failure to Protect offences

### **3. OUR STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT**

St Catherine's Early Education Centre has zero tolerance for child abuse.

We are committed to:

- Protecting children from physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse and neglect
- Promoting children's safety, participation and empowerment
- Listening to children and responding to their concerns
- Providing culturally safe environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- Providing culturally safe environments for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Providing safe and inclusive environments for children with disability
- Embedding child safety into governance and leadership

Child safety is everyone's responsibility.

### **4. SCOPE**

This policy applies to:

- Approved Provider and Board
- Nominated Supervisor
- Responsible Persons
- Educators and staff
- Volunteers and students
- Contractors and visitors

## **5. EMBEDDING THE 11 CHILD SAFE STANDARDS**

St Catherine's demonstrates compliance with all 11 Victorian Child Safe Standards:

### **Standard 1 – Culturally Safe Environment**

Cultural safety is defined by the child's experience. Aboriginal voices and perspectives are respected and embedded.

### **Standard 2 – Child Participation & Empowerment**

Children are encouraged to speak up. Child-friendly complaints processes are visible.

### **Standard 3 – Families & Communities**

Families are informed and engaged in child safety practices.

### **Standard 4 – Equity & Diversity**

Discrimination is not tolerated.

### **Standard 5 – Child Safe Recruitment**

Robust recruitment and screening systems are implemented.

### **Standard 6 – Complaint & Reporting Processes**

Clear internal and external reporting pathways are maintained.

### **Standard 7 – Child Safety Knowledge & Skills**

Mandatory child protection training is completed annually.

### **Standard 8 – Safe Physical & Online Environments**

Risks are identified, assessed and mitigated.

### **Standard 9 – Continuous Improvement**

Child safety systems are reviewed and improved.

### **Standard 10 – Implementation & Oversight**

Leadership actively monitors child safety.

### **Standard 11 – Documented Policies & Procedures**

All policies are maintained, version controlled and accessible.

## 6. SAFE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS

St Catherine's ensures:

- Effective supervision at all times (S165, Reg 122–123)
- Active supervision strategies
- Premises designed to facilitate supervision (Reg 115)
- Students and visitors are never left alone with children
- Daily indoor and outdoor safety checks
- Hazard identification and maintenance systems
- Safe storage of hazardous chemicals (SDS register maintained)
- Tobacco, drug and alcohol-free environment

Risk assessments are completed for:

- Excursions and transport
- Safe arrival of children
- Sleep and rest
- Water play
- High-risk activities
- Online environments

## 7. SAFE ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS

Online safety is governed by:

### **CS-07 Safe Use of Digital Technologies Policy**

The service adopts the National Model Code for Taking Images and Videos of Children.

- Only service-issued devices may be used
- Personal devices are prohibited while working directly with children
- Secure storage and retention controls are in place
- Written consent is obtained for images
- Children are supervised when using digital technologies

## 8. WORKFORCE SUITABILITY & SCREENING

The service maintains:

- Rigorous recruitment processes
- WWCC verification and monitoring

- Prohibition notice checks
- Mandatory child protection training
- Induction into Code of Conduct and Child Safety policies
- Ongoing supervision and performance review

## **9. REPORTING & RESPONSE**

All staff are mandatory reporters.

If a reasonable belief of child abuse is formed:

- The Four Critical Actions for Early Childhood Services are followed
- Immediate safety steps are taken
- Reports are made to Child Protection / Victoria Police
- Reportable Conduct notifications are made where required
- Regulatory Authority notified within required timeframes

Reports are confidential and protected under law.

## **10. CHILD INFORMATION SHARING**

As an Information Sharing Entity, the service complies with:

- Child Information Sharing Scheme
- Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme
- MARAM Framework

Information is shared lawfully to promote child safety.

## **11. GOVERNANCE & BOARD OVERSIGHT**

The Approved Provider and Board:

- Endorse this policy
- Receive child safety compliance reports
- Monitor incidents and trends
- Review risk assessments
- Ensure training compliance
- Ensure regulatory notifications are made

Child safety is a standing agenda item at governance meetings.



## 12. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

This policy is reviewed:

- Annually
- Following legislative change
- Following serious incidents
- Following identified risk trends

Stakeholder consultation includes:

- Educators
- Families
- Child Safety Officer
- Governance representatives

Updates are communicated within 14 days.

## 13. RELATED POLICIES

- CS-02 Child Protection Policy
- CS-03 Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy
- CS-04 Code of Conduct
- CS-06 Working with Children Check Procedure
- CS-07 Safe Use of Digital Technologies
- HS-01 Physical Environment Policy
- GOV-01 Governance & Leadership Policy

## 14. DEFINITIONS

### Appendix A – Definitions of Child Abuse (DET Source)

## 15. POLICY REVIEW & CONSULTATION RECORD

**Policy Code:** CS-01

**Policy Name:** Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy

### Review Details

Review Date	Review Type	Trigger	Conducted By
Feb 2026	<input type="checkbox"/> Annual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Legislative Change <input type="checkbox"/> Incident Review <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audit <input type="checkbox"/> Governance Review	Legislative changes	Jennie Madden

### Legislative & Standard Check

Requirement	Compliant	Action Required	Completed
Ministerial Order 1359	Yes	Nil	✓
Victorian Child Safe Standards	Yes	Nil	✓
Reg 168(2)(h)	Yes	Nil	✓
Reg 84	Yes	Nil	✓
Reportable Conduct Scheme	Yes	Nil	✓
Child Information Sharing	Yes	Nil	✓

### Risk & Incident Analysis

Review Area	Findings	Improvements Implemented
<b>Incident trends</b>	No systemic patterns identified.	Reporting pathway clarified in CS-01A procedure.
<b>Supervision</b>	Existing supervision practices strong.	Explicit reference to active supervision and prohibition of unsupervised visitors strengthened.



# St Catherine's

## EARLY EDUCATION CENTRE

<b>Recruitment screening</b>	WWCC and prohibition checks in place.	Recruitment alignment clarified within policy structure.
<b>Digital safety</b>	National Model Code adopted.	Digital content removed from this policy and aligned to CS-07.
<b>Family feedback</b>	Families value transparency in reporting.	Commitment to notify within 14 days of policy updates added.

Child safety considered as paramount consideration:

✓ Yes

### Consultation Evidence

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Feedback Incorporated</b>
<b>Educators</b>	Staff meeting discussion	February 2026	Clarified reporting flow and documentation requirements.
<b>Child Safety Officer</b>	Direct policy review	February 2026	Strengthened governance oversight section.
<b>Board</b>	Governance review		Endorsed consolidated CS framework.
<b>Families</b>	Policy notification in newsletter/Foyer	March 2026	Provided transparency of policy restructure.

### Summary of Changes

<b>Section Updated</b>	<b>Description of Amendment</b>	<b>Reason</b>
<b>Entire Policy</b>	Merged Child Safe Environments Policy and Child Safety &	Remove duplication and strengthen governance clarity.



# St Catherine's

EARLY EDUCATION CENTRE

	Wellbeing Policy into single CS-01 umbrella policy.	
<b>Governance Section</b>	Added explicit Board monitoring responsibilities.	Align to QA7 and Child Safe Standard 10.
<b>Digital Safety</b>	Removed duplication and cross-referenced CS-07 Digital Policy.	Structural alignment and compliance clarity.
<b>Reporting Section</b>	Embedded Four Critical Actions reference and clarified mandatory reporting pathways.	Strengthen legislative alignment.
<b>Continuous Review</b>	Added structured consultation and review cycle wording.	Demonstrate Exceeding Theme 2 (critical reflection).
<b>Appendices</b>	Moved abuse definitions to appendix A	Improve executive clarity and policy structure.

## Approval

Director: Jennie Madden

Date: 04/03/2026

Board Endorsement-Approved Provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

Next Scheduled Review: February 2028



### Review Details

Policies are reviewed biennially or earlier if triggered by legislative change, incident review, regulatory advice or governance audit findings.

Version	Date Reviewed	Reviewed By	Reason for Review	Summary of Changes	Approved By	Next Review Date
2026-v1	Feb 2026	Director	Legislative reform (2026 amendments)	As Above	Approved Provider / Board	Feb 2028

### CS-01A

#### CHILD SAFETY RESPONSE PROCEDURE

*(Supporting CS-01 Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy)*

**Procedure Code:** CS-01A

**Related Policy:** CS-01 Child Safety & Wellbeing

**Applies to:** All educators, staff, volunteers, students

#### PURPOSE

To provide clear, step-by-step guidance for responding to:

- A disclosure of abuse
- A suspicion of abuse
- An allegation involving a staff member, volunteer or contractor

- A child exhibiting harmful sexual behaviour
- Immediate child safety concerns

This procedure aligns with:

- Victorian Four Critical Actions
- Reportable Conduct Scheme
- Reg 84 – Awareness of child protection law
- S162A – Child protection training
- Ministerial Order 1359

## **FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS – FLOW SEQUENCE**

### **STEP 1 – RESPOND TO THE CHILD**

If a child is in immediate danger → CALL 000.

Otherwise:

- Stay calm
  - Listen carefully
  - Reassure the child
  - Do NOT promise secrecy
- 
- Do NOT investigate
  - Do NOT ask leading questions
  - Document factual observations

Preserve evidence where relevant.

Immediately notify:

- Director / Nominated Supervisor
- Child Safety Officer

### **STEP 2 – REPORT TO AUTHORITIES**

**If the source is WITHIN the service:**



# St Catherine's

EARLY EDUCATION CENTRE

- Contact Victoria Police
- Notify Commission for Children and Young People (within 3 business days)
- Notify Regulatory Authority (within 24 hours if serious incident)

## **If the source is OUTSIDE the service:**

- Report to Child Protection (DHHS)
- Contact Victoria Police if required
- Notify Director

If unsure → call Child Protection for advice.

All reports must be documented using:

## **Responding to Suspected Child Abuse Template**

### **STEP 3 – INFORM PARENTS (When Appropriate)**

Before contacting parents:

- Consult with Police or Child Protection
- Follow guidance on what can be shared

If incident occurred at the service:

Parents must be notified within 24 hours.

### **STEP 4 – PROVIDE ONGOING SUPPORT**

The service will:

- Develop a safety and wellbeing plan
- Provide trauma-informed support
- Adjust supervision if required
- Maintain confidentiality
- Offer referrals to support services

Child safety remains the paramount consideration.



## **ADDITIONAL SCENARIOS**

### **If Allegation Involves Staff / Volunteer:**

- Do not investigate internally
- Remove person from contact with children (if required)
- Notify Approved Provider
- Lodge Reportable Conduct notification
- Follow procedural fairness

### **If Child Exhibits Harmful Sexual Behaviour:**

- Separate children
- Supervise closely
- Document behaviour
- Consult with Child Protection if required
- Follow guidance from DET

## **DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS**

All incidents must be:

- Recorded factually
- Dated and signed
- Stored securely
- Entered into Incident Register
- Reported to Regulatory Authority if required

## **CONFIDENTIALITY & PROTECTION**

Under the Children, Youth and Families Act:

- Reporters are protected from liability
- Identity remains confidential
- Reports made in good faith are legally protected

## **STAFF TRAINING REQUIREMENTS**



# St Catherine's

EARLY EDUCATION CENTRE

All staff must:

- Complete annual child protection training
- Complete induction prior to working alone with children
- Understand reporting pathways
- Sign Code of Conduct

## **APPENDIX A**

### **DEFINITIONS OF CHILD ABUSE**

*(Victorian legislative definitions aligned to Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 and DET guidance)*

#### **WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?**

Child abuse is any action, inaction or behaviour towards a child that causes harm, places a child at risk of harm, or adversely affects a child's physical, emotional, psychological or developmental wellbeing.

Child abuse may involve a single incident or multiple incidents over time.

Under Victorian legislation, child abuse includes:

1. Physical abuse
2. Sexual abuse
3. Grooming
4. Emotional or psychological abuse
5. Neglect
6. Exposure to family violence
7. Problematic or sexually abusive behaviour by a child

#### **1. PHYSICAL ABUSE**

Physical abuse occurs when a child suffers, or is likely to suffer, significant harm from a non-accidental injury.

Examples include:

- Hitting, shaking, burning, or otherwise physically harming a child
- Inflicting injuries inconsistent with explanation
- Deliberate poisoning

## **2. SEXUAL ABUSE**

Sexual abuse occurs when a person uses power, authority or manipulation to involve a child in sexual activity.

This may include:

- Sexual touching or penetration
- Exposure to pornography
- Sexualised communication
- Forcing or coercing a child to participate in sexual activity
- Sexual exploitation

Children cannot legally consent to sexual activity under Victorian law.

## **3. GROOMING**

Grooming is predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time.

Grooming may involve:

- Building trust through gifts or special attention
- Isolating the child
- Gradual boundary violations
- Manipulating the child or family

Grooming is a criminal offence in Victoria.

## **4. EMOTIONAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE**

Emotional abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, threatened, humiliated, isolated, or exposed to persistent hostility.

Examples include:

- Constant criticism or belittling
- Threats of harm
- Exposure to ongoing family conflict or violence
- Withholding emotional support

## **5. NEGLECT**

Neglect is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs to the extent that their health or development is significantly impaired or at risk.

This may include failure to provide:

- Adequate supervision
- Nutrition
- Medical care
- Safe housing
- Emotional support

## **6. FAMILY VIOLENCE**

Exposure to family violence constitutes child abuse.

Family violence may include:

- Physical violence
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Financial abuse
- Coercive or controlling behaviour

Children exposed to family violence may experience significant trauma.

## **7. CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

Child sexual exploitation occurs when a child is manipulated or coerced into sexual activity in exchange for something of value (money, gifts, accommodation, affection).

This can occur online or in person.

## **8. PROBLEM SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR & SEXUALLY ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR**

Children under 10 years old:

- Cannot consent to sexual activity
- May display problem sexual behaviour requiring support

Children aged 10–15:

- May engage in sexually abusive behaviour
- May require therapeutic intervention
- May also be victims of abuse

Any concerning sexual behaviour must be responded to under the Four Critical Actions.

## **INDICATORS OF ABUSE**

Indicators may be physical, behavioural or emotional and vary depending on age and development.

Examples include:

- Unexplained injuries
- Sexualised behaviour beyond developmental expectations
- Fear of specific adults
- Extreme withdrawal or aggression
- Persistent hunger or poor hygiene
- Disclosure by the child

The presence of indicators does not confirm abuse but requires professional judgement and appropriate action.

## **MANDATORY REPORTING**

All educators and staff are mandatory reporters and must report where they form a reasonable belief that a child:

- Has suffered significant harm, or
- Is at risk of significant harm

Failure to report may constitute a criminal offence.

## **SOURCE**

Definitions adapted from:

State of Victoria (Department of Education)  
Early Childhood Guidance: Identifying and Responding to Child Abuse  
Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)