

St Thomas Aquinas Primary School

Engaging Families in Child Safety Policy



St Thomas Aquinas School is a school which operates with the consent of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne and is owned, operated and governed by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS).

Introduction

Catholic education is an active partnership between family and school, where families are recognised as the first and ongoing educators of their children. Schools and families partner in the shared privilege and responsibility for children and young people's faith formation, learning, safety and wellbeing.

At St Thomas Aquinas School, we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of our school. Our commitment is drawn from and inherent to the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the gospel (CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety).

'It is better to illuminate than to merely shine.'

St Thomas Aquinas

As the Catholic School Community of St Thomas Aquinas, we are called to:

- Gather for the celebration of sacrament, prayer and liturgy
- Nurture the sense of wonder of God's love through the Gospel stories
- Build community by forming positive, effective relationships
- Offer a comprehensive and inclusive curriculum that is evaluated in an ongoing manner in the light of current theory, practice and policy direction
- Provide opportunities that enable students to feel safe, challenged and worthwhile

Vision

At St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School, our vision impacts on everything we do, how we treat each other and how we engage in our learning:

- we aim to empower children in their learning for life and to develop skills necessary to face challenges with hope, faith and resilience
- we journey together as a faith community valuing our Catholic identity
- children are the heart of our community and we support parents to become actively involved in their children's learning
- we value opportunities for learning and reflection that challenge us to aspire to individual excellence.

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to outline the strategies and actions that we have in place at St Thomas Aquinas School to ensure that families, carers and other members of the school community are informed about relevant child safety and wellbeing matters and are involved in the promotion of child safety and wellbeing at the school.

This Policy takes into account the specific requirements of the Child Safe Standards as set out in Ministerial Order No. 1359.

Scope

This Policy applies to school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy. It should be read in conjunction with related school policies and procedures, including:

1. Child Safety Framework
2. Child Safety Code of Conduct
3. Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
4. PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to Abuse – Reporting obligations
5. Engaging with Families in Child Safety Policy
6. Working with Children Check Policy

Principles

At St Thomas Aquinas School, the following principles underpin our commitment to family engagement:

- Families and carers should have the opportunity to participate in decisions relating to child safety and wellbeing which affect their child.
- Our school engages and openly communicates with families, carers and other members of the school community about our child safe approach.
- All members of the school community should have access to information relating to child safety and wellbeing.
- Families, carers and other members of the school community must have the opportunity to provide input into the development and review of the school's policies and practices relating to child safety and wellbeing.
- Families, carers and other members of the school community have the right to be informed about the operations and governance of the school in relation to child safety and wellbeing.

Policy

St Thomas Aquinas School is committed to ensuring that all members of our school community are kept informed about relevant child safety and wellbeing matters and are involved in the promotion of child safety and wellbeing at St Thomas Aquinas School.

We implement the following strategies and actions to ensure that we are able to meet this commitment.

Strategies / actions used by school leadership

The Principal, the school governing authority and school leaders at St Thomas Aquinas School recognise their particular responsibilities to communicate and engage with families, carers and other members of the school community in relation to issues regarding child safety and wellbeing. Strategies and actions used to carry out this responsibility include:

- utilising the St Thomas Aquinas School Engaging Families in Child Safety Policy to inform and guide curriculum planning, policies and practices
- supporting staff, through appropriate professional learning, to strengthen their communication and engagement skills and to understand the value and importance of effective communication and engagement
- identifying opportunities for parents and carers to participate in decisions that affect their child's safety and wellbeing

- ensuring that existing policies and practices relating to child safety and wellbeing are made publicly available so that they are easily accessible to families, carers and other members of the school community
- engaging with families, carers and other members of the school community to collaboratively develop and periodically review policies and practices relating to child safety and wellbeing
- creating opportunities to ensure that members of the school community are adequately informed about the school's operations and governance relating to child safety and wellbeing

Strategies / actions used by school staff, volunteers, contractors and clergy

School staff, volunteers, contractors and clergy at St Thomas Aquinas School also have a responsibility to support the school governing authority and school leaders in communicating and engaging with families, carers and other members of the school community regarding child safety and wellbeing. Strategies and actions used to carry out this responsibility include:

- creating and maintaining open lines of communication with families, carers and other members of the school community, particularly with respect to child safety and wellbeing matters
- liaising with parents and carers in relation to any concerns and/or decisions that affect their child and giving them the opportunity to contribute to any discussions, where appropriate
- ensuring that parents, carers and others in the school community are updated and involved in child safety and wellbeing
- ensuring they act in accordance with the principles set out in this Policy when managing issues relating to child safety and wellbeing

At St Thomas Aquinas School we have developed a range of strategies and actions that support our engagement with families, carers and our community.

These include:

- education for School Advisory Council - this is one of the platforms where parent voice in, policy, decision making is shared
- families participate in decisions relating to child safety and wellbeing which affect their child
- we engage and openly communicate with families, carers and other members of the school community about our child safe approach
- all members of the school community have access to information relating to child safety and wellbeing
- families, carers and other members of the school community have the opportunity to provide input into the development and review of the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and practices
- families, carers and other members of the school community are informed about the operations and governance of the school in relation to child safety and wellbeing
- Parents and Friends Committee
- community conversations (held via zoom) during remote learning period
- regular Parent Support Group Meetings and Student Led Conferences
- parent engagement initiatives through the parents and friends committee network that has been re-established - this includes parent training and education.

External references

Related Resources – Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools

[eXcel: Wellbeing for learning in Catholic school communities](#)

[Horizons of Hope: Vision and Context](#)

[Horizons of Hope: Families as Partners](#)

[Horizons of Hope: Wellbeing](#)

Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed in consultation with members of the wider community as part of the school's two-year review cycle of its child safety practices.
- Update of the policy will occur if any new requirements come to hand.

Responsible director	Director, Learning and Regional Services
Policy owner	General Manager, Student Wellbeing
Approving body/individual	MACS Board
Approval date	13 April 2022
Risk rating	High
Date of next review	April 2023

POLICY DATABASE INFORMATION	
Related documents	
Superseded documents	
New policy	New