



Safe School Policy

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Purpose

It is incumbent upon all schools to be safe places to support student wellbeing and learning.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) enshrines the right of every child to an education that supports their development to their full potential. The South Australian Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People states that all children should be physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy, safe, and involved, inspired and engaged, successful learners and active members of society. The South Australian Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 obligates all organisations to create and maintain environments in which children and young people feel safe from harm. The Education and Children's Services Act 2019 holds that students should not be discriminated against on the basis of their gender, mental or physical impairment, religion, or race, nor that of their parents. National Principles for Child Safe Organisations uphold equity and respect for diversity. Catholic Education SA aspires for all children in Catholic schools to become leaders for the world God desires.

The National Safe School Framework states that "All Australian schools are safe, supportive and respectful teaching and learning communities that promote student wellbeing." Feeling safe at school is universally understood to be associated with positive engagement with others and with learning experiences which in turn leads to improved academic, employment and mental health and wellbeing outcomes.

Mercedes College is committed to providing a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment in which all students can learn, grow, and flourish, to be the people God wants them to be. We acknowledge that feeling safe is a fundamental prerequisite for student success and achievement in all aspects of their lives at school and beyond and uphold every student's right to be safe in school, on school grounds, on school buses and during organised school events.

Integral to enacting the Safe School Policy is the ongoing development and implementation of clear policies and procedures, drafted, refined, and reviewed in collaboration with staff and students, whose voice is paramount.

Scope of Policy

"All Australian schools are safe, supportive and respectful teaching and learning communities that promote student wellbeing" – National Safe School Framework (2011)

All policies and procedures within Mercedes College reflect the principles of Pastoral Care, which enhances the dignity of the human person within a safe and supportive Catholic community.

Students who feel connected, safe, and respected are more likely to be active participants in their learning and to achieve better physical, emotional, social, and educational outcomes. Schools are committed to learning and behaviour support as a critical protective factor in children and young people's continuing education and positive outcomes.

Policy

Our college community is committed to Jesus' challenge that we love one another. Living out our Mercy Keys (Compassion, Loyalty, Justice, Integrity, Responsibility, Mutual Respect) enables the provision of a safe, supportive, and respectful Catholic school community. This is in keeping with the National Safe School Framework guiding principles, which emphasise the importance of student safety and wellbeing for effective learning in all school settings. Through our commitment to the Mercy Keys and in keeping with these principles, Mercedes College:

- Affirms the rights of all members of the college community to feel safe and be safe at school.
- Acknowledges that being safe and supported at school is essential for student wellbeing and effective learning, and that there is a distinction between students being in physical danger and engaging in developmentally challenging and supervised educational activities which can give rise to a level of discomfort.
- Strives to actively build a sense of belonging and connection acknowledging that being safe and supported at school is essential for student wellbeing and effective learning.
- Accepts responsibility for developing and sustaining safe and supportive learning and teaching communities that fulfil the college's child protection responsibilities.
- Encourages the active participation of all college community members in developing and maintaining a safe school community where diversity is valued.
- Use situational teaching moments to educate all in the college community about the distinction between bullying and developmentally typical behaviour and appropriate responses.
- Actively supports young people to develop understanding and skills to keep themselves and others safe and conduct mutually respectful relationships.
- Commits to developing a safe school community through a whole-school and evidence-based approach that incorporates

explicit teaching of respectful ways to communicate, express emotions, problem solve and give and seek consent.

- Supports high quality teaching and learning in positive behaviour support practices to enhance the personal and social capabilities of all students.
- Adopts a restorative practice approach in matters of conflict.
- Collaborates with students and parents/caregivers in developing, implementing, monitoring and reviewing action plans to address reports of bullying and harassment.
- Determine satisfaction with both the process undertaken and outcomes achieved, to identify whether further action may be required, or the matter can be considered resolved.
- Acknowledges that a range of developmentally appropriate responses are required to address the variety of underlying causes of bullying behaviour.
- Commits to developing behaviour support responses that are inclusive of developmental, social, and cultural considerations.
- Regularly gathers information via a range of student questionnaires and teacher records to identify and address emerging individual and cohort bullying behaviours.
- Participate in large scale research projects focused on enhancing understanding of bullying behaviour and effective intervention.
- Review and update the Policy in collaboration with staff, students, and families.

Underlying Principles

All Mercedes College policies and procedures reflect the principles of Pastoral Care which enhance the dignity of the human person within a safe and supportive Catholic community.

Safety is generally defined as the condition of being protected from or unlikely to cause danger, risk, or injury. The overarching Wellbeing Policy articulates the deliberate, developmentally appropriate risk-taking educational activities that may give rise to a level of discomfort, but ultimately build individual capacity and promote resilience in the face of challenge. These are not deemed unsafe college practices, or bullying behaviour in the context of this Policy.

Bullying takes the form of aggressive acts directed by one or more persons, generally repeated over time, which the recipient typically feels powerless to avoid. This can include repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying of any form, or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are typically not defined as bullying, although this can vary if an online message or image is posted and goes viral.

Cyber-bullying uses e-technology as a means of victimising others. It includes the use of an internet

service or mobile technologies - such as e-mail, chat room discussion groups, instant messaging, social media, or web pages - with the intention of harming another person. Examples include communications that seek to intimidate, control, manipulate, put down or humiliate the recipient, including offensive messages, pictures, prank calls, forwarding pictures to unintended recipients, using fake or anonymous profiles to target others, posting negative comments and more.

Harassment is behaviour that targets an individual or group due to their identity, race, sexual orientation, cultural or ethnic origin, religion, physical characteristics, gender, marital, parenting, or economic status, age, ability, or disability, and that offends, humiliates, intimidates, or creates a hostile environment. Harassment may be ongoing or a single act and may be physical, verbal, written, visual e.g. gestures and or exclusion. The behaviour can occur directly or online. Students expressing gender and sexual diversity are recognised as at greater risk for targeting.

Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual conduct, which makes a person, recipient or bystander feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated. Sexual harassment can be a single incident, repeated or continuous, direct or indirect and take various forms, including uninvited physical contact (touching, sexual comments or actions); sexual based pictures, objects, calls, e-mails, text messages, letters or notes; questions or suggestions about a person's private life; unwelcome propositions or requests for dates or favours; questions about sexual activity including sexual based jokes, banter or innuendos; viewing, downloading or printing pornography or sexually explicit material.

Restorative Practice is a process that acknowledges that the people most effective at finding a solution to a problem, are the people who are most directly affected by the problem. Restorative processes create opportunities for those involved in a conflict to work together to understand, clarify and resolve the situation and work together towards repairing the personal and relational harm caused.

All acts of bullying and harassment are counter to the Mercedes College core values enshrined in the Mercy Keys and articulated in the Inclusion Policy.

Details of bullying and harassment incidents will be recorded on the student information system. Reports made by families or other third party will remain confidential unless specific permission from the complainant is granted, disclosure is required by law or where limited disclosure is required as part of the investigation process.

In the event that there are concerns in relation to the process undertaken in response to a report, or the outcome achieved, action can be taken under the college's Grievance Policy and associated Grievance Procedure.

Supporting procedures or policy support documents

Overarching guidelines for ensuring a safe school environment include the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), National Safe School Framework (2011), South Australian Children and Young People (Safety) Act (2017), National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (2018) and the



South Australian Child Development Council's Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People (2019).

The primary curriculum drivers include the Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum, Made in the Image of God (MITIOG) and Crossways.

The delivery of these curricula largely occurs through the Junior School Social Emotional learning activities, Year 6-12 Growth and Personal Skills (GPS), Health and PE.

Related documents/links

- Policy for the Care, Wellbeing and Protection of Children and Young People – CESA Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy - CESA Policy
- Wellbeing Policy
- Personal Responsibility Policy and Procedures
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy for Students and Procedures
- Responding to Bullying – CESA Policy
- Safe School Procedures
- Responding to problem sexual behaviour in children and young people – Guidelines for staff in education and care settings
- Building Respectful Relationships: Behaviour Education and Student Behaviour – CESA Policy
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Racial Hatred Act 1992
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986
- Grievance Policy
- Grievance Procedure