

St Mary's 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), where formation and education are based on the principles of Catholic doctrine, and where the teachers are outstanding in true doctrine and uprightness of life.

## Purpose

St Mary's School is committed to the safety of all students, and the creation of a just and respectful environment that supports the health and wellbeing of the school community. All in our school have a duty of care, a moral obligation and a shared responsibility to protect the most vulnerable members of the community.

The purpose to ensure children and young people are protected against sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility, and schools have particular responsibilities to ensure children and young people are safe in their care, and to actively and intentionally work to eliminate all forms of abusive behaviour towards children.

## Scope

This Policy applies to the whole school community in supporting safe environments for all children and young people.

It concerns the responsibilities of St Mary's School in complying with the provisions of the [Working with Children Act 2005](#) (Vic.), which was enacted 'to assist in protecting children from sexual or physical harm by ensuring that people who work with, or care for, them have their suitability to do so checked by a government body' (section 1(1)).

Teachers with current Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration are exempt from obtaining a Working with Children Check (WWCC) as the VIT registration process includes screening for suitability for child-related work. Ministers of religion and those performing duties of a religious vocation are required to have a WWCC.

## Definitions

For the purposes of the Working with Children Act 2005, **children** are those under the age of 18 years.

**Child-related work** is work involved in one of the occupational fields listed in the Act, and usually involves direct contact with a child where that contact is not directly supervised by another person.

**Note:** Work is **not** child-related work by reason only of occasional direct contact with children that is incidental to the work.

**Direct contact** is any contact between a person and a child that involves:

- physical contact
- face-to-face oral communication.

**Direct supervision** is supervision of a person's contact with children, rather than of their work in general. Supervising another person's contact with children must be personal and immediate, but can include a brief absence such as taking a telephone call in another room.

**Unsupervised child-related work** is any type of activity where an adult has 'direct contact' with a student or students/young people that is not directly supervised by a member of staff.

**Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT)** is the registration body for teachers in Victoria.

**Working with Children Check (WWCC)** is required by persons doing child-related work in Victoria as paid workers or volunteers, where that work is not directly supervised by someone with an appropriate check. A WWCC is not required by teachers who hold current VIT registration.

## Principles

The following principles underpin our commitment to child safety within our school:

- all students deserve, as a fundamental right, safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect
- a safe environment is required to protect children and young people from harm, and to prevent staff or other adults from abusing their position of authority and trust
- our school's commitment to the protection of children is embedded in the culture of our school, and our individual and collective responsibility to take action is understood and accepted
- each child and young person's ongoing safety and wellbeing must be the primary focus of all decision-making.

At St Mary's School, the leadership, teachers and all staff must be fully self-aware of, and comply with, their professional obligations and responsibilities with regard to the protection of children.

## Policy

St Mary's School will ensure that a current WWCC is held by all persons involved at the school who are required to do so. The school will maintain accurate and up-to-date WWCC and VIT registers for teachers, clergy, other staff, contractors and volunteers. This duty is allocated to the Administration Officer.

Each year, all staff are made aware of the school's procedures for volunteers, contractors and other persons, including the need for prior approval of such work by the designated member of the school's leadership team.

## Who requires a WWCC?

Only people doing child-related work (and who aren't otherwise exempt under the Act) need a WWCC. This applies to both paid and volunteer workers. Not everyone who has contact with children needs a WWCC. More information about the occupations requiring a WWCC is included in the [list of occupational fields](#).

A WWCC is required:

- by adults engaged in child-related work within the meaning of the Act, which includes engaging in voluntary work and providing practical training as well as paid employment
- if the work usually involves direct contact with a child or children
- when the contact with children is not occasional direct contact and is not incidental to the work
- for clergy and those performing duties of a religious vocation, including the parish priest, who must show the Principal or delegate their current WWCC

- by volunteers, including members of the school's advisory committees or boards, and those involved in practical training, such as student teachers.

School staff are responsible for obtaining their own WWCC; however, our school must ensure that valid checks are held by all those requiring one by maintaining a current and up-to-date WWCC register. The currency of WWCCs by all staff is monitored by a staff member nominated by the Principal at the school whose role specifically includes maintenance of the WWCC register and related tasks.

The school will ensure that a register of all teaching staff who, while having current registration with the VIT, are exempt from obtaining a separate WWCC is maintained in the school.

Each year, all staff are made aware of the WWCC requirements and that it is a condition of their tenure at the school to ensure currency is maintained.

### **External references**

Victorian [Working with Children Act 2005](#)

Working with Children Check Victoria [website](#)