OLMC Child Safe Policy - Child Friendly Version

March 2024

RATIONALE

Our Lady of Mercy College (OLMC), as a Catholic learning community in the Mercy tradition, is a community committed to a culture of child safety.

Protection for children and young people is based upon the belief that each person is made in the image and likeness of God and that the inherent dignity of all should be recognised and fostered. Our Mercy Values of Compassion, Justice and Courage and Joy also compel us to act to assist others, especially the young and vulnerable. There is particular attention paid to the most vulnerable children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with a disability, children who are unable to live at home, international students, and LGBTIQ+ students.

POLICY STATEMENT

All children and young people at the College have the right to feel safe and be safe. OLMC Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our strong commitment to the care, safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. It provides an outline of the commitments, procedures and strategies developed to keep children and young people safe from harm. This policy covers all forms of abuse in our school environment, on campus, online and in other locations provided by the College. Our College community includes students, families, employees, contractors, volunteers and clergy.

PRINCIPLES

At OLMC we believe:

- The policies, guidelines, processes and codes of conduct for the care, wellbeing and protection of children and young people are based on honest, respectful and trusting relationships between adults and children and young people.

- Our College policies and practices demonstrate compliance with legislative requirements and cooperation with the Church, Governments, the police and Government human services agencies.

- All children and young people regardless of their age, gender, race, religious beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, cultural, social or economic background, have the right to personal safety, including safety in relationships and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect.

- Our College works in partnership with families and the community to ensure that they are engaged in decision-making processes, particularly those that have an impact on child safety and protection.

- All students have the right to an education in all aspects of personal safety in partnership with their families.

- All members of our College community are committed to keeping students safe from harm.

- All persons involved in situations where harm is suspected or disclosed must be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect.

- All members of the College community should feel free to raise concerns about child safety, knowing these will be taken seriously by the College leadership team.

- Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained, with information being provided to those who have a right or a need to be informed both legally and pastorally.

- The wellbeing of children and young people will always be the College's first priority.

- The College does not tolerate child abuse.

- The College aims to create an environment where children and young people are free to enjoy life to the fullest without any concern for their safety.

The college's commitment to students

The College commits to:
- the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people.
- providing children and young people with positive and nurturing experiences.
- listening to children and young people and empowering them by taking their views seriously, and addressing any concerns that they raise.
- taking action to ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse or harm.
- teaching children and young people the necessary skills and knowledge to understand their rights and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing.
- ensuring the needs of young people enrolled in the College are met, including those who are most vulnerable.
- recognising the importance of friendships and to encouraging support from peers, to help students feel safe and less isolated.
- developing a culture that facilitates and provides opportunities for student participation, and that strengthens the confidence and engagement of students by being responsive to their input.
- seeking input and feedback from children and young people regarding the creation of a safe College environment.
- ensuring employees, contractors, volunteers and clergy involved in their education pass safety checks and all employees are trained in child safety.

The college's commitment to families

The College commits to:
- communicating honestly and openly with families about the wellbeing and safety of their children and young people.
- engaging with, and listening to, the views of families about our child-safety and wellbeing practice, policies and procedures.
- transparency in our decision-making with families where it will not compromise the safety of children or young people.
- ensuring the relevant information relating to child safety and wellbeing is accessible to families.

- acknowledging the cultural diversity of children and young people and their families, and being sensitive to how this may impact on student safety and wellbeing issues.
- continuously reviewing and improving our systems to protect children and young people from abuse.

What to do if you feel unsafe or believe you have been abused

If you feel unsafe or believe you have been abused, you can tell any teacher or adult at the College. All staff at the College have been trained to listen to young people and to support young people in seeking help to ensure safety.

If you think someone else has been abused or is unsafe you should talk to any teacher or adult at the College or an adult you trust. Help your friends or any other young person by encouraging them to tell a trusted adult. Even if they specifically ask you not to tell an adult, you should still speak up. It is more important to make sure that a young person is helped and feels protected.

All adults working at the College have a responsibility to protect any child under their care. They will be able to help you.

● The adult will listen to your concerns and find a way to help you.
● The information will not be shared with the person who is making you feel unsafe.
● Information will only be shared with people who can support and protect you.
● In some cases, the people helping you are required by law to tell the police, the Department of Health and Human Services' Child Protection services and/or your family to prevent any further abuse, or risk of abuse.

The College Complaints Handling Protocol is located on the OLMC website if you would like to raise a concern. The College records any child safety complaints.

RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

MEL_OLMC Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
MEL_OLMC Child Safety and Wellbeing School Procedures
OLMC Complaints Handling Policy

Policy Ratified:	**March 2024**
Policy Reviewed:	**March 2024**
Policy Review Date:	**March 2026**
Person Responsible:	**Head of Student Wellbeing**