

***Christ the Light Catholic Parish  
of  
Kinglake, Mernda, Doreen, Whittlesea***

***Child Safety Policy***

***19<sup>th</sup> January 2017***



***Date of policy:*** *10<sup>th</sup> December 2016*

*Updated 19 January 2017*

***Date of last major review:*** *Not Applicable*

***Date of next major review:*** *15 March 2018*

## 1. Introduction

At, *Christ the Light Catholic Parish of Kinglake, Mernda, Doreen, Whittlesea* we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of our parish. Our commitment is drawn from and inherent in the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the gospel ([CAM Commitment Statement to Child Safety](#)).

The Church's social doctrine constantly points out the need to respect the dignity of children. 'In the family, which is a community of persons, special attention must be devoted to the children by developing a profound esteem for their personal dignity, and a great respect and generous concern for their rights' (Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, 26). Indeed it was Jesus who, when his disciples were arguing among themselves about who was the greatest, directed his attention to a little child and said to his disciples, '*Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me*' (Mark 9.37).

## 2. Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the strong commitment of *Christ the Light Catholic Parish of Kinglake, Mernda, Doreen, Whittlesea* to the care, safety and wellbeing of all children in our parish. It provides an outline of the policies, procedures and strategies developed to keep children safe from harm, including all forms of abuse in our parish environment, on site, online and in other locations used by the parish.

This policy applies to all parish personnel, including parish employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy.

## 3. Principles

The Catholic Church has a moral, legal and mission-driven responsibility to create nurturing environments where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard and they are safe and feel safe ([CAM Commitment Statement to Child Safety](#)).

**The following principles underpin our commitment to child safety at *Christ the Light Catholic Parish of Kinglake, Mernda, Doreen, Whittlesea*:**

- Our parish has zero tolerance of child abuse.
- All children are entitled to, as a fundamental right, safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect.
- Our parish 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 adults in our parish, including staff, clergy, volunteers, parishioners, contractors, have a responsibility to care for children and young people, to positively promote their wellbeing and to protect them from any kind of harm or abuse.
- The policies, guidelines and codes of conduct for the care, wellbeing and protection of children are based on honest, respectful and trusting relationships between adults and children and young people.
- All persons involved in situations where harm is suspected or disclosed must be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect.
- Staff, clergy, volunteers, parents, parishioners including children and contractors should be free to raise concerns about child safety, knowing these will be taken seriously by the parish leadership.

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

#### 4. Definitions

**Child:** A person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

**Child abuse** includes:

- (a) any act committed against a child involving:
  - (i) a sexual offence
  - (ii) an offence under section 49B(2) of the **Crimes Act 1958** (grooming)
- (b) the infliction on a child of:
  - (i) physical violence
  - (ii) serious emotional or psychological harm
- (c) serious neglect of a child.

**Child safety** encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

**Child neglect:** The failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and wellbeing.

**Child physical abuse:** Generally, child physical abuse refers to the non-accidental use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Physically abusive behaviours including shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning. The fabrication or induction of an illness by a parent or carer (previously known as Munchausen syndrome by proxy) is also included in this definition of “Child physical abuse”.

**Child protection:** Statutory services designed to protect children who are at risk of serious harm.

**Child sexual abuse:** Any sexual activity between a child under the age of consent (16) and an adult or older person (i.e. a person two or more years older than the victim) is child sexual abuse.

Child sexual abuse can also be:

- any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult in a position of power or authority over them; the age of consent laws do not apply in such instances due to the strong imbalance of power that exists between young people and authority figures, as well as the breaching of both personal and public trust that occurs when professional boundaries are violated
- any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult family member, regardless of issues of consent, equality or coercion
- sexual activity between peers that is non-consensual or involves the use of power or coercion

- non-consensual sexual activity between minors (e.g. a 14-year old and an 11-year old), or any sexual behaviour between a child and another child or adolescent who, due to their age or stage of development, is in a position of power, trust or responsibility over the victim. Sexual activity between adolescents at a similar developmental level is not intended to be included in this definition of “Child sexual abuse”.

**Mandatory Reporting:** The legal requirement to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect is known as mandatory reporting. Mandated persons include teachers, nurses, police, psychologists, psychiatrists and medical practitioners.

**Reasonable Belief:** When an adult is concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person, they must assess that concern to determine if a report should be made to the relevant agency. This process of considering all relevant information and observations is known as forming a ‘reasonable belief’. A ‘reasonable belief’ or a ‘belief on reasonable grounds’ is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumour or speculation. A ‘reasonable belief’ is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

## 5. Policy Commitments

All children at *Christ the Light Catholic Parish of Kinglake, Mernda, Doreen, Whittlesea* parish have the right to feel safe and be safe. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we do not and will not tolerate child abuse. We aim to create a child-safe and child-friendly environment where children are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety. 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, and children with a disability.

### **Our commitment to our children**

- We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people in our parish.
- We commit to providing children and young people with positive and nurturing experiences.
- We commit to listening to children and young people and empowering them by taking their views seriously, and addressing any concerns that they raise with us.
- We commit to taking action to ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse or harm.
- We commit to teaching children and young people the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing.
- We commit to seeking input and feedback from children regarding the creation of a safe parish environment.
- We will advise parents to always accompany their child to toilets when parish gatherings are conducted at all of our worship centres, churches and parish facilities.

### **Our commitment to parents and carers**

- We commit to communicating honestly and openly with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children.

- (b) We commit to engaging with, and listening to, the views of parents and carers about our child- safety practices, policies and procedures.
- (c) We commit to transparency in our decision-making with parents and carers where it will not compromise the safety of children or young people.
- (d) We commit to acknowledging the cultural diversity of our parishioners and being sensitive to how this may impact on child safety issues.
- (e) We commit to continuously reviewing and improving our systems to protect children from abuse.

**Our commitment to our parish employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy (called “staff” for the purposes of this policy):**

- (a) We commit to providing all *Christ the Light Catholic Parish of Kinglake, Mernda, Doreen, Whittlesea* staff with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles. This will include regular and appropriate learning opportunities.
- (b) We commit to providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm policy and procedures in relation to child safety and young people’s protection and wellbeing. This will include annual training in the principles and intent of the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct, and staff responsibilities to report concerns.
- (c) We commit to listening to all concerns voiced by *Christ the Light Catholic Parish of Kinglake, Mernda, Doreen, Whittlesea* parishioners and staff about keeping children and young people safe from harm.
- (d) We commit to providing opportunities for *Christ the Light Catholic Parish of Kinglake, Mernda, Doreen, Whittlesea’s* staff to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.

## **6. Responsibilities and Organisation Arrangements**

Everyone employed or volunteering at *Christ the Light Catholic Parish of Kinglake, Mernda, Doreen, Whittlesea* has a responsibility to understand the important and significant role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make (CAM Commitment Statement to Child Safety). Parishioners will be informed that copies of this Policy will be made available. Our leadership team will be open to recommendations and suggestions as pertaining to this Policy. These will be addressed at the review of the Policy

The parish has allocated roles and responsibilities for child safety as follows:

### **6.1 Guide to Responsibilities of Parish Leadership**

The parish priest, Parish Leadership Team and the Parish Pastoral Team of *Christ the Light Catholic Parish of Kinglake, Mernda, Doreen, Whittlesea* all recognise their particular responsibility to ensure the development of preventative and proactive strategies that promote a culture of openness, awareness of, and shared responsibility for child safety. This Policy has been discussed and copies given to individual members of both Leadership and pastoral teams of our Parish

Responsibilities include:

- creating an environment for children and young people to be safe and to feel safe
- upholding high principles and standards for all staff and clergy
- promoting models of behaviour between adults and children and young people based on mutual respect and consideration
- ensuring thorough and rigorous practices are applied in the recruitment, screening and ongoing professional learning of staff
- ensuring that parish personnel have regular and appropriate learning to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters
- providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm legislative obligations, policy and procedures in relation to child and young people's protection and wellbeing
- ensuring the parish meets the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

## **6.2 Guide to Responsibilities of Parish Staff**

Responsibilities of parish staff include:

- adhering to acceptable behaviours as outlined in the Parish Code of Safety for Children
- treating children and young people with dignity and respect, acting with propriety, exercising their duty of care, and protecting children and young people in their care
- following the legislative (including mandatory reporting obligations where appropriate) and Archdiocesan processes if, in the course of their work, they form a reasonable belief that a child or young person has been or is being abused or neglected
- providing a physically and psychologically safe environment where the wellbeing of children and young people is nurtured
- undertaking regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to child safety and the wellbeing of children and young people
- assisting children and young people to develop positive, responsible and caring attitudes and behaviours which recognise the rights of all people to be safe and free from abuse

## **6.3 Organisational Arrangements**

- Attendance at June 2016 Training Seminar held by the Archdiocese (Fr Martin Ashe Parish Priest, Fr Joseph Truong Assistant Priest, Suny Philip Administrative Assistant)
- Presentation of Child Safety Document for discussion at Pastoral Team meeting – 15<sup>th</sup> October 2016 and Parish Leadership Team – 6<sup>th</sup> December 2016
- Sub-Committee review of documents to specifically address issues pertaining to the *Christ the Light Catholic Parish of Kinglake, Mernda, Doreen and Whittlesea* and inclusion of same in this Policy
- Appeal for parishioners to join a sub-committee.
- Time-line to publish Child Safety Policy, Child Safety Code of Conduct to parishioners – December 10<sup>th</sup> 2016. Copies of the Child safety Code will be displayed in all Parish Worship centres and individual copies will be attached to the weekly bulletin. At each Mass, on the week-end of December 10<sup>th</sup>, parishioners will be verbally informed of both the Code and Policy
- Posting of Child Safety Code of Conduct and Policy on parish web-site

- Our Parish staff and sub-committee have made a commitment to attend the Archdiocesan Training Sessions to be held in 2017 – a resource which will enable the process of on-going review and clarification of the roles of both the Child Safety Officer and parishioner volunteers

## 7. **Expectations of our Parish Staff – Child Safety Code of Conduct**

At *Christ the Light Catholic Parish of Kinglake, Mernda, Doreen, Whittlesea* community, we expect parish staff to proactively ensure the safety of children at all times and to take appropriate action if there are concerns about the safety of any child in the parish environment. All staff must remain familiar with the relevant laws, the code of conduct, and policies and procedures in relation to child protection and comply with all requirements. We have developed a Child Safety Code of Conduct - posted in each Worship Centre, which recognises the critical role that staff play in protecting the children in our care and establishes clear expectations of staff for appropriate behaviour with children in order to safeguard them against abuse and or neglect.

Our Code also protects parish personnel through clarification of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

## 8. **Child Safety and Participation**

At *Christ the Light Catholic Parish of Kinglake, Mernda, Doreen, Whittlesea* we actively encourage all children to openly express their views and feel comfortable about giving voice to the things that are important to them.

We discuss with our children what they can do if they feel unsafe and enable them to understand, identify, discuss and report on child safety. We listen to and act on any concerns children or their parents or carers, raise with us.

We will ensure that a child will not be alone at any time with an adult who is not a family member.

As a parish when children are invited to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation we will follow the Guidelines and Recommendations as circulated by Archbishop Denis Hart to the Archdiocese on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2016

## 9. **Reporting and Responding**

Our parish records any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct and stores the records in accordance with security and privacy requirements. Our parish complies with legal obligations that relate to managing the risk of child abuse under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.), the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.) and the recommendations of the *Betrayal of Trust* report.

Our parish's **Child Protection – Reporting Policy** as at 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016, sets out the actions required under the relevant legislation when there is a reasonable belief that a child in our parish environment is in need of protection or a criminal offence has been committed, and provides guidance and procedures on how to make a report.



Until a Child Safety Officer is appointed for our parish the steps of Reporting are as follows:

- When an incident is reported to any members of the Parish Staff, Parish Leadership Team of Parish Pastoral Team, the person to whom the matter is given, will immediately and confidentially refer this to the Parish Priest who will act in accordance with the Archdiocese. In the absence of the Parish Priest, his nominated person will act in the same manner.
- When training of Parish Staff and Parish Leadership and Pastoral Staffs is complete a careful review of our Reporting Policy will take place. The purpose of this is to ensure that we are clearly informed of the responsibilities of the Parish Priest and the Child Safety Officer (when appointed)

We work to ensure all children, families and staff know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or a victim, or if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

Our parish has also established internal processes to ensure that appropriate action is taken to respond to concerns about the wellbeing and/or safety of a child.

Our complaints and disclosure processes are outlined and detailed in the following policies and procedures:

- ***Grievance and Complaints Procedures***

Each employee has in their individual contract a procedure for Grievance and Complaints which will pertain to issues which may be raised against them. The issue will be raised with the Parish Priest and procedures followed accordingly.

A parishioner/ parent/adult/child who raises a Grievance or Complaint must be listened to with sensitivity and referred immediately to the Parish Priest who will deem if the Child Safety Officer should be notified. The Archdiocesan Guidelines will be followed

Parish staff who are aware of this Grievance or Complaint must reserve confidentiality

***The CAM Code of Conduct for Caring for Children “May our Children Flourish” will be the procedure followed in the matter of reporting breaches of the Code of Conduct (Refer to paragraphs 105-107 ‘May Our Children Flourish’)***

## 10. **Screening and Recruitment of Parish Staff**

Christ the Light Catholic Parish of Kinglake, Mernda, Doreen, Whittlesea will apply thorough and rigorous screening processes in the recruitment of employees and volunteers involved in child-connected work. Our commitment to child safety and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements for such employee, contractor and volunteer positions, and all applicants are provided with copies of the parish Child Safety Code of Conduct and the Child Safety Policy.

When recruiting and selecting employees, contractors and volunteers involved in child-connected work, we make all reasonable efforts to:

- confirm the applicant’s Working with Children Check and National Police Check status and/or professional registration (as relevant)
- obtain proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications
- verify the applicant’s history of work involving children
- obtain references that address the applicant’s suitability for the job and working with children.

We have processes for monitoring and assessing the continuing suitability of parish staff to work with children, including regular reviews of the status of Working with Children Checks.

Each employee will be given a Contract/Agreement on appointment.

The Parish Priest conducts an annual appraisal with each employee

### **11. Child Safety – Education and Training for Parish Staff**

*Christ the Light Catholic Parish of Kinglake, Mernda, Doreen, Whittlesea* provides employees, volunteers and clergy with regular and appropriate opportunities to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters. This includes induction, ongoing training and professional learning to ensure that everyone understands their professional and legal obligations and responsibilities, and the procedures for reporting suspicion of child abuse and neglect.

### **12. Risk Management**

*At Christ the Light Catholic Parish of Kinglake, Mernda, Doreen, Whittlesea* we are committed to proactively and systematically identifying and assessing risks to child safety across our whole parish environment (physical and online), and reducing or eliminating (where possible) all potential sources of harm. We document, implement, monitor and periodically review our risk management strategies for child safety and ensure that the strategies change as needed and as new risks arise. Regular meetings of staff and Leadership Teams are held

Child Safety and Protection is a regular agenda item at these meetings  
Staff are encouraged and committed to training offered by the Archdiocese

Regular meetings of staff and Leadership Teams are held

Child safety Code and Policy are distributed and addressed at both staff and Leadership teams meetings

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Staff are encouraged and committed to training offered by the Archdiocese

### **13. Relevant Legislation**

- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.) – Three new criminal offences have been introduced under this Act.
- (a) **Failure to disclose offence:** Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 has an obligation to report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence.
- (b) **Failure to protect offence:** The offence will apply where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation. A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk, but negligently fail to reduce or remove it.
- (c) **Grooming offence:** This offence targets predatory conduct designed to facilitate later sexual activity with a child. Grooming can be conducted in person or online, for example via interaction through social media, web forums and emails.

## 14. Related Policies

### 14.1 Catholic Archdiocese Melbourne Policies

Our parish embraces and works with the following policies

- Working with Children Check Protocols
- National Police Record Check Policy
- Code of Conduct for Caring for Children “May Our Children Flourish”
- Social Media Policy

### 14.2 Parish Policies

There are a number of areas in which children are involved in our Parish Programs. Individual Policies to be developed are:

- Altar Servers APPENDIX 1
- Catechesis [Children’s Liturgy of the Word/Sacrament programs/RCIC] APPENDIX 2
- Parish Choir APPENDIX 3
- Social/Fund-Raising Events [Fete – BBQ’s – Fun Days – Social Evenings] APPENDIX 4
- Photography/Video of Children and Vulnerable Persons. [Recommended Actions] APPENDIX 5

## 15. Breach of Policy

Where an **employee** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this Policy, this may result in disciplinary consequences. The Parish Priest will be responsible in this instance

Where the **parish priest** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the concerned party is advised to contact the Vicar General. If there is any reasonable belief that a criminal act has been committed, the concerned party is advised to contact Victoria Police. The person nominated by the Parish Priest in his absence will make contact with the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne (Office of Professional Conduct and Ethics) This may be the Child Safety Officer (to be determined)

Where any **other member of the parish community** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the parish priest is to take appropriate action *and / or* contact Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne (Office of Professional Conduct and Ethics).

## 16. Review of this Child Safety Policy

*At Christ the Light Catholic Parish of Kinglake, Mernda, Doreen, Whittlesea* we are committed to continuous improvement of our child safety systems and practices. We intend this policy to be a dynamic document that will be regularly reviewed to ensure it is working in practice and updated to accommodate changes in legislation or circumstance.

### History of Updates to Policy

Date	Comment [major review, minor review]
15 <sup>th</sup> October ‘16	Minor review
17 <sup>th</sup> November ‘16	Minor Review
1 <sup>st</sup> December ‘16	Major Review
19 <sup>th</sup> January ‘17	Minor Review
15 March ‘18	Minor Review

## 7. Inclusion of All

We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability. (CALD)

## 18. References

Catholic Education Melbourne Child Safety Policy Editable Template – June 2016

Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, *Commitment Statement to Child Safety* – September 2016

State of Victoria 2016, ***Child Safe Standards*** – *Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools: Ministerial Order. 870*, Education & Training Reform Act 2006, Victorian Government Gazette No. S2

Victorian Government Department of Justice 2016, ***Betrayal of Trust Implementation.***

***Archbishop Denis Hart: Letter to all Parish Priests and principals of Primary and Secondary Schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne re. Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. 10<sup>th</sup> November 2016***

***May Our Children Flourish: Code of Conduct for caring for Children(Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne 2014) New Laws for the Protection of Children in Victoria 2014***

### Attachments:

1. Catechesis
2. Altar Servers
3. Choir
4. Social/Fund Raising Committee
5. Photography/Video – of children

SIGNED:.....

Fr Martin Ashe P.P.

19<sup>th</sup> January 2017