

# **Sacred Heart Parish Preston**

## **Child Safety - Safeguarding Children and Young People**

### **Code of Conduct**

Sacred Heart Parish, Preston

11 February 2018

Central to the mission of Sacred Heart Parish is an unequivocal commitment to fostering the dignity, self-esteem and integrity of children and young people and providing them with a safe, supportive and enriching environment to develop spiritually, physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially.

#### **Purpose**

We are committed to a safe and nurturing culture for all children in our Parish Community.

The Sacred Heart Parish Preston holds the care, safety and wellbeing of children as central and fundamental responsibilities of the Church. This 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.

We want our children to be safe, happy and empowered.

The Sacred Heart Parish Preston has a universal expectation for the protection of children. It is resolutely committed to ensuring that all those engaged in the Church promote the inherent dignity of children and young people and their fundamental right to be respected and nurtured in a safe environment. This is particularly so for the most vulnerable children, including aboriginal children, those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability.

The Catholic Church has a moral, legal and mission-driven responsibility to create nurturing environments where children are respected, their voices are heard and where they are safe and feel safe.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously and reported in line with our legal obligations, our moral obligations and our Church Parish Community policies.

Creating child-safe environments is a dynamic process that involves active participation and responsibility by parishes, schools, families and communities. It is marked by collaboration, vigilance and proactive approaches across policies, procedures and practices.

We are committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early and then reducing or removing them. Every person involved in the Catholic Church has a responsibility to understand the important and specific 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.

### **Scope**

This Code of Conduct has a specific focus on safeguarding children and young people at Sacred Heart Parish against sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect. It is intended to complement child protection legislation and the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne's "Code of Conduct for Caring for Children, May our children flourish".

All staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and parish council members at Sacred Heart Parish Preston are expected to actively contribute to a parish culture that respects the dignity of its members and affirms the Gospel values of love, care for others, compassion and justice. They are required to observe child-safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below.

### **Acceptable behaviours**

All staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and parish council members are responsible for supporting the safety of children by:

- adhering to the parish Child Safe Policy and upholding the parish's Statement of Commitment to child safety at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse and harm
- treating everyone in the parish community with respect (modelling positive and respectful relationships and acting in a manner that sustains a safe pastoral environment)
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child have been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child's self-identification)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance policy towards discrimination)

- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, by ensuring reasonable care is taken to cater for any additional needs being faced)
- ensuring as far as practicable that an adult is not alone with a child
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to the police
- understanding and complying with all reporting obligations in regard to current laws. All criminal offences are to be reported to the Police.
- reporting any child safety concerns to the parish priest or the Vicar General if the concern relates to the parish priest or Ms Judeline Wadhvani, (0490660787), the Child Safety Officer.
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe.

### **Unacceptable behaviours**

Staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and parish council members must not:

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse
- develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example, inappropriate sitting on laps)
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors or being alone with a child with no good cause)
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- manage disruptive or unsafe behaviour by degrading or isolating a child; corporal punishment is never acceptable. Physical restraint should only be used as a last resort or in an emergency, or if part of a behavioural management plan which has been registered with the school Principal/special education teacher or parish authority.
- drive children in their car without the express permission of the parent
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal details or social activities)
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children

- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- discriminate against any child because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability
- have contact with a child or their family who is/are not socially related outside of the pastoral duties reasonably associated with the role description of the person's position in the parish without the parish priest's or child safety officer's (if the parish has appointed someone to this role) knowledge and/or consent (other than accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street)
- have any online contact (including by social media, email, instant messaging etc.) with a child or their family who is/are not family or socially related (unless necessary e.g. by providing families with e-newsletters)
- use any personal communication channels/device such as a personal email account to conduct parish communications
- exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses with a child or their family who is/are not family or socially related
- photograph or video a child without the consent of the parent or guardians
- engage with children while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- consume drugs on parish premises or at parish events.

### **Reporting abuse**

If you believe that a criminal offence may have been committed, please first report the allegations to police.

Victoria Police will explain the options that are available to victims and what each pathway may involve. Speaking to the police does not commit the person reporting abuse to a full judicial response. Contact with Victoria Police can be made to the SANO Taskforce of (03) 9247 6666 or at [sanotaskforce@police.vic.gov.au](mailto:sanotaskforce@police.vic.gov.au) or, if urgent, by dialling 000.

The SANO Taskforce is based within Victoria Police's Crime Command and comprises specialist sexual assault detectives. The SANO Taskforce was established to investigate historic and new allegations emanating from the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into child sexual abuse involving religious and non-government organisations and to coordinate investigations emerging from the Royal Commission into institutional responses to child sexual abuse.

SANO investigators are trained experts in sexual assault matters who will maintain the confidentiality of anyone who makes a complaint or wishes to provide information regarding child sexual abuse.

### **Who to Contact**

If a criminal offence may have been committed, please first report the allegations to police.

If you see something of concern, please let us know. Parishioners can take child safety concerns to either the Parish Priest Fr Jan, or Ms Judeline Wadhvani, **(0490660787)**, the Child Safety Officer. All matters raised are treated with the utmost confidentiality.

If you wish to pursue a complaint directly through the Church, you can do so through either the Melbourne Response, if the complaint relates to abuse by a priest, religious or Church lay person under the control of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, or otherwise through Towards Healing.

Victims can contact the Melbourne Response on (03) 9225 6422 or Towards Healing on 1800 816 030.

Counselling is offered to victims through both the Melbourne Response and Towards Healing processes.

### **Linked Policy/ Procedure**

Sacred Heart Parish's Child Safety Policy

### **Further Information**

The following links may be helpful

- [SANO Taskforce](#)
- [Melbourne Response](#)
- ["If you see something, say something"](#)

### **Child Protection Legislation**

- [Summary of Working with Children Act](#)
- [Summary of Grooming offence](#)
- [Summary of Failure to Protect legislation](#)
- [Summary of Failure to Report legislation](#)
- [Victorian Child Safe Standards](#)

- Reportable Conduct scheme

**Responsible Body**

The responsible body for this Code of Conduct is the Parish Priest and Parish Pastoral Council.

**Effective Date**

The Code will take effect from 11 February 2018.

**Review Date**

This Code will be reviewed at least annually or more often if required.

Date Last Reviewed: November 2018

Due for Next Review: November 2018