

Safe Environments for Children and Vulnerable People Policy and Procedures

If you need help or support, contact one of more of the following:

- Head of College, Professor Don Markwell AM
- Dean, Mr Stuart Meldrum
- Director of Wellbeing, Ms Sally Cassidy
- Director of Learning, Dr Katrina Stats
- Adviser and Special Projects, Dr Rachel Buxton
- Chaplain, Rev'd Canon Steve Daughtry
- the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78
- [Online child protection reporting system -
https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse](https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse)
- SA Police: 000 (emergency)

Overview

St Mark's College is committed to providing safe physical and online environments where the protection and wellbeing of children and vulnerable people is achieved in accordance with:

- [Children and Young People \(Safety\) Act 2017 \(SA\)](#) ("the Act") which requires appropriate policies and procedures be in place to ensure that child-safe environments are established and maintained.
- [Child Safety \(Prohibited Persons\) Act 2016 \(SA\)](#) which aims to minimise the risk to children posed by persons who work or volunteer with them.

There is a list of definitions and a list of external support services at the end of this document.

1. Statement of commitment

In line with the College's values, all members of St Mark's College have the right to be treated with dignity and respect, and to work, study, live, and participate in a safe environment.

The College takes very seriously its duty of care to do all it reasonably can to provide a safe environment for all.

This policy acknowledges the distinct obligations that apply to the College, and to staff and to partner organisations, to ensure that all people can experience College environments and engage in College-related activities safely.

Under South Australian law, a child or young person means a person under 18 years of age. While the College does not primarily provide services to children, there is usually a cohort of young people under the age of 18 at the commencement of their residency. In addition, some

of the College's student recruitment, community engagement, and other activities include interactions with children, young people, or vulnerable people.

The College acknowledges that the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations 2019 define an environment that is safe for children and young people as being one where:

- Child safety and wellbeing is consciously considered and promoted;
- Engagement with children and young people is genuine and valued;
- Conditions within the environment reduce the likelihood of harm while increasing the likelihood that any risks of harm will be identified; and
- Any concerns, allegations or disclosures made about the risk of harm are dealt with appropriately.

The College is committed to creating and maintaining environments that are safe for children, young people, and vulnerable people.

2. Application

This Policy is binding on all St Mark's College staff and contractors, students, visitors, and guests on College grounds and relates specifically to their contact and work with children and vulnerable people (as defined by this Policy) and to their broader role in developing and supporting a safe environment at the College. It is also binding on College staff and contractors, students, visitors, and guests attending and/or participating in College or College-related events and activities, whether held on or outside College grounds, including online. In some circumstances, at the College's discretion, it may apply in other contexts also.

All those involved in College or College-related activities should anticipate the presence and actual and potential involvement of children, young people, and vulnerable individuals on College grounds and in College-related activities. Where such involvement can be anticipated, risk management should be implemented to ensure the environment and the activities are appropriate and safe. The measures adopted to manage risks should be inclusive of the needs of children, young people and vulnerable individuals of diverse backgrounds and cultural experiences.

Requirement for staff and contractors to have a working with children check

As the College is a prescribed organisation as defined in the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, it has clear statutory obligations where services or activities are being delivered directly to children or young people. It must ensure that all personnel involved have valid working with children checks which apply the most comprehensive screening criteria possible and give effective clearance for anyone working with any vulnerable people.

3. Policy Principles and Procedures

When they are participating in College or College-related activities, the College

recognises and supports the rights of children, young people and vulnerable people to be safe in the environments they encounter.

To ensure the appropriate inclusion of children, young people and vulnerable people, the College will:

1. Incorporate safety considerations relating to children, young people and vulnerable people as a part of usual Work, Health and Safety obligations and practices.
2. Adopt a risk management approach to the protection of children, young people and vulnerable people who are, or may be, involved in College-related activities by actively assessing risk of harm for those activities.
3. Provide guidance on expected behaviours and responsibilities for all staff and students as appropriate for their role, ensuring they can access guidance, training or support that is commensurate with the assessed risk to children, young people or vulnerable people.
4. Ensure that any person in a [prescribed position](#) or involved in an activity where a valid working with children check is required by law, or otherwise determined by a risk assessment of the position or activity, has a valid and current clearance prior to commencement and for ongoing employment or engagement at the College by requiring that all direct personnel, including any relevant volunteer, contractor, student, regular visitor or other relevant person must obtain and maintain a working with children check for the duration of the period that they are involved with children or vulnerable people in a College-related activity.
5. Manage any disclosures or formal reports of harm or risk of harm to a child, young person or a vulnerable person at the College (made in addition to any mandatory reporting obligations as below) by enabling anyone affected, concerned or uncertain about their obligation to report an incident or find help.

Disclosures or formal reports to the College will be treated using one or more of the following policies and procedures, as appropriate, to ensure that the child or vulnerable person is appropriately supported by the College, and that action is taken to address any inappropriate conduct by a member of the College community:

- [Behaviour Management Policy](#)
- [Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy](#)
- [Sexual Misconduct Policy](#)

Where a threat is immediate, you should contact SA Police on 000.

6. Support staff and students to meet their statutory obligations to protect a child from sexual abuse and to [report any reasonable suspicion](#) that a child or young person is at risk of harm (as set out in section 30 of [Children and Young People \(Safety\) Act 2017 \(SA\)](#)) by providing information advising them to use the following SA Government notification services:
 - **Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78**
 - [Online child protection reporting system](#).
7. Provide access to information and direct staff working with children to training resources to ensure they understand their personal and organisational obligations for child safety and protection by requiring that relevant child safety and reporting training is included in the induction for any personnel with statutory reporting obligations (as set out in Chapter 5 of the [Children and Young People \(Safety\) Act 2017 \(SA\)](#)) or as appropriate for their role and activity. This training should be completed as soon as practicable and refresher training completed periodically as recommended.
8. Allow only appropriate use of technology and social media as is required by the IT Acceptable Use and Security [Policy](#) and relevant procedures and guidelines. Suspicions of online child exploitation activity should also be reported to the Australian Federal Police directly or via the [ThinkUKnow](#) website.
9. Ensure that policies and procedures designed to ensure safe environments for children and young people are in place as required by the [Children and Young Person \(Safety\) Act 2017 \(SA\)](#) (section 114).

4. Definitions

Child Safe Environment – means a respectful and protective environment where children are safe from harm when participating in any College activities.

Child exploitation: For the purposes of this policy, the College has adopted the definition of child exploitation in the [DFAT Child Protection Policy 2017](#) to mean one or more of the following:

- Committing or coercing another person to commit an act or acts of abuse against a child,
- Possessing, controlling, producing, distributing, obtaining, or transmitting child exploitation material, and/or
- Committing or coercing another person to commit an act or acts of grooming or online grooming.

Child-related work is defined by section 6 of the [Child Safety \(Prohibited Persons\) Act 2016 \(SA\)](#)

Prescribed position refers to a position in which a person works, or is likely to work, with children; or a position or class of positions identified by statute from time to time.

Risk management refers to a process of evaluating potential risks of harm and actively implementing controls or treatments as appropriate. This may include the provision of training or a requirement that those with close contact with children have valid working with children clearances.

Risk of harm: For the purpose of this policy, the College has adopted the definition of **harm** (section 17) and **at risk** (section 18) and **reasonable suspicion obligations** (Chapter 5) in the [Children and Young Person \(Safety\) Act 2017 \(SA\)](#):

- **Harm** means: *physical or psychological harm caused by sexual, physical, or emotional abuse or neglect.*
- **At risk** means: a child or young person will be taken to be at risk if the *child or young person has suffered or is likely to suffer harm.*
- **Reporting a reasonable suspicion** of a child at risk of harm is mandated for people employed in certain roles including those working directly with children and means: you must contact the Department for Child Protection via the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78 or <http://www.reportchildabuse.families.sa.gov.au/>

Working with children means being engaged in an activity with a child where the contact would reasonably be expected as a normal part of the activity and the contact is not incidental to the activity. Working includes volunteering and other unpaid work.

Working with children checks means an [official assessment](#) provided by the South Australian Department of Human Services under the [Child Safety \(Prohibited Persons\) Act 2016 \(SA\)](#). The assessment unit will issue a clearance or advise that the person is a “prohibited person” and cannot be employed in positions that involve working with children.

Vulnerable people: For the purpose of the Policy the definition of *vulnerable people* is adopted from the [Indigenous Student Assistance Grants Guidelines 2017](#) to refer to individuals over 18 who may not be able to protect themselves from harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability.

Acknowledgements

With thanks to University of Adelaide ‘Safe Environments for Children and Vulnerable People Policy’.

Policy Review

This Policy and Procedures will be reviewed on an annual basis, to ensure that it is compliant with best practice management and the College's legal obligations. The Policy and Procedures may also be reviewed and revised at other times as required.

Policy updated: January 2024

Policy authorised by: Head of College

Date to be reviewed: January 2025