



1894

# AQUINAS COLLEGE

## Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

2019

---



# AQUINAS COLLEGE

## Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

### Objectives

This Statement provides the framework for:

- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child protection, safety and wellbeing, deter inappropriate interactions and facilitate detection of abuse and grooming within the College;
- the creation of a safe and supportive College environment and a positive and robust child protection culture;
- the promotion and open discussion of child protection issues within the College; and
- complying with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection in WA.

### Statement of Commitment

Aquinas College is committed to providing education and care to children and young people to assist them to develop into high-achieving, supported students, positively connected to each other and to the communities in which they live and which they will serve.

The College is committed to ensuring the safety, welfare and wellbeing of all children and young people at the College and is dedicated to protecting them from abuse and grooming by implementing robust policies and procedures to deter abuse and grooming, and facilitate detection and reporting at the College.

The College's Statement of Commitment to Child Safety has been designed to reflect the Child Safe Organisations WA: Guidelines and focus on what is best for children.

At Aquinas College, we have a zero tolerance for child abuse and grooming. The College regards its child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and to maintain safe and supportive College physical and online environments for all children and young people.

### Child-Safe Values & Principles

The following child-safe values and principles guide the College's commitment to child safety and form the basis for all child protection policies and procedures at the College.

1. All children have the right to be safe.
2. The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
3. The views of the child and their privacy must be respected.
4. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Safety Code of Conduct and Staff Code of Conduct.
5. The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child-safe culture.
6. Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our College community.
7. Procedures are in place to screen all staff including boarding staff, Direct Contact Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers who have direct contact with children.
8. Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
9. Child protection training is mandatory for all EREA Governing Body Board members and College staff members, including boarding staff.
10. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse and grooming are simple and accessible for all members of the College community.
11. Procedures are in place to ensure all College premises are designed to ensure the safety of children.

See also the EREA Commitment Statement to Child Safety.

## Standards of Behaviour

The College demands the highest standards of behaviour for all stakeholders interacting with children and young people in our College environments. The EREA Child Safe Code of Conduct clearly outlines expected standards of behaviour and the consequences if stakeholders fail to meet the College's expectations.

## Responsibilities

The College acknowledges that child protection is everyone's responsibility.

At Aquinas College all staff members including boarding staff, Direct and Indirect Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children.

Specific responsibilities for each group of the College community are further explained in the "Who is Responsible for Child Protection?" appended to this document.

## Reporting Child Protection Concerns

Our Child Protection Program provides detailed guidance for all members of the College community as to how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and grooming and how to report child protection concerns to the Headmaster or Deputy Headmaster, and our Child Safety Officers. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse and grooming incidents to relevant external authorities.

Staff, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, Volunteers, students, parents/guardians and other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse or grooming are asked to contact the College's Senior Child Safety Officer, David McFadden, Headmaster, by phoning 08 9450 0600 or emailing David.McFadden@aquinas.wa.edu.au.

Where the concern relates to the Headmaster or Deputy Headmaster, report to the EREA Regional Director via the EREA National Office at (03) 9426 3200.

In accordance with the WA Registration Standards for Non-Government Schools (Section 9.2), Trustees of Edmund Rice Education Australia, as the governing body of Aquinas College, ensures the Director General of WA Department of Education is notified as soon as practicable (and in any event within 48 hours) of a breach or suspected breach of the EREA Child Safe Code of Conduct; particularly where such breaches relate to:

- Receipt of an allegation of child abuse, including but not limited to sexual abuse, committed against a student by a staff member or student, or another person on the school premises or during school-related activities, whether the abuse is alleged to have occurred recently or in the past; or
- Issuing a formal warning to a staff member or ceasing the employment of a staff member for a breach of the EREA Child Safe Code of Conduct suspected to be grooming behaviour.

The Headmaster is delegated responsibility for completing and lodging the Critical and Emergency Incident Report Form with CEWA in accordance with CEWA's published procedures as soon as practicable and, in any event, within 48 hours of a critical or emergency incident. A copy of any Critical and Emergency Incident Report Form lodged with CEWA is concurrently lodged with the EREA Executive Director.

\* This statutory declaration is made in the broader context of child protection governance, notwithstanding Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia's (CECWA) gazetted position as the governing body of the system of Catholic schools in Western Australia for the purposes of the registration standards and section 160(1)(c) of the School Education Act.

\*\* It is Catholic Education Western Australia policy that CEWA is notified of all critical incidents at WA Catholic schools, including Aquinas College. CEWA will then notify the Director General of the Department of Education on behalf of the College.

All communications will be treated confidentially on a 'need to know basis'.

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.

If you have any questions regarding the College's Statement of Commitment to Child Safety, and how it applies to you, the College's Child Safety Officers are available for advice.

## Program Compliance and Review

Aquinas College is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Protection Program and to ensuring the College's compliance with WA child protection law and regulation.

The Program is reviewed annually and updated regularly for overall effectiveness, in light of experience and to ensure compliance with all child protection related laws, regulations and standards. For more information, refer to the Continuous Review & Improvement section of our Child Protection Program.

## Who is Responsible for Child Protection?

Child protection is everyone's responsibility.

Society as a whole shares responsibility for promoting the safety and protection of children from abuse, neglect and grooming.

In the College context, all members of the College community have their role to play – teachers, staff, administrators, parents/guardians, volunteers and students. That said, the College's Leadership Team is committed to 'leading from the front' and engaging in a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child protection issues.

Students are encouraged to take an active role in developing and maintaining a child-safe environment at the College and are provided with opportunities to contribute and give feedback in the development of the College's policies and practices. Students are also made aware of the avenues available to them to report or disclose abuse or concerns for their safety or the safety of others.

### Key Roles & Responsibilities include:

- The Headmaster
- The College Board
- Child Safety Officers
- Staff Members
- Direct Contact Volunteers
- Indirect Contact Volunteers
- Third Party Contractors
- External Education Providers

### The Headmaster's Responsibilities

The EREA Executive delegates operational management of the College, and the Child Protection Program, to the Headmaster.

The Headmaster is ultimately responsible, and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that:

- the College's child protection policies and procedures are implemented effectively with available resources effectively deployed;
- appropriate College Child Safety Officers are appointed and trained;
- a strong and sustainable child-safe culture is maintained within the College;
- any child protection incidents arising are dealt with professionally and in a timely manner;
- the EREA Regional Director receives regular reports with respect to child protection matters;
- all child protection matters that meet the criteria of our Critical Incidents Policy are reported to EREA immediately;
- a Critical and Emergency Incident Report Form has been completed and lodged with CEWA in accordance with CEWA's published procedures as soon as practicable and, in any event, within 48 hours of a critical or emergency incident;
- a copy of any Critical and Emergency Incident Report Form lodged with CEWA is provided to the EREA Executive Director as soon as practicable and, in any event, within 48 hours of the incident;
- all staff members, Direct Contact Volunteers and Direct Contact Contractors are aware of the College's Child Protection Program and trained in implementing the Program's processes and procedures;
- external support is organised to assist parties following a disclosure or suspicion of abuse or grooming; and
- the College is complying with its legal and regulatory obligations with respect to child protection.

\*It is CEWA policy that Catholic Education WA is notified of all critical incidents at CEWA schools, including Aquinas College. CEWA will then notify the Director General of the Department of Education on behalf of the College.

\*\*The definition of a critical incident includes:

- Receipt of an allegation of child abuse, including but not limited to sexual abuse, committed against a student by a staff member or student, or another person on the school premises or during school-related activities, whether the abuse is alleged to have occurred recently or in the past;

- Issuing a formal warning to a staff member or ceasing the employment of a staff member for a breach of the Staff Code of Conduct suspected to be grooming behaviour.

### **Child Safety Officers' Responsibilities**

A number of senior staff members are nominated as the College's Child Safety Officers.

Child Safety Officers are selected based on several considerations, namely:

- their personal attitudes, experiences and beliefs, for example, a person who is non-judgmental, calm, resilient and demonstrates a high degree of integrity and respect for confidentiality;
- their role within the College, for example, a person who has seniority and experience working with complex student and family issues at the College and someone who is readily accessible and available to all members of the College community; and
- their personal profile within the College, for example, a person who is approachable, who students and staff trust and who is willing and able to respond to issues personally and sensitively.

#### ***Key responsibilities for the College's Child Safety Officers include:***

- having a good working knowledge of the College's child protection policies and procedures;
- being a point of contact for staff, or other members of the College community, raising child protection concerns within the College;
- communicating the College's child protection policies and procedures to all stakeholders including students, parents/guardians, staff and volunteers;
- on behalf of EREA, ensuring that the College's Child Protection Program is being effectively implemented;
- ensuring that all staff undertake child protection training so that they are able to identify signs of abuse, neglect and grooming, understand how to respond and when to make a referral either internally or to an external agency;
- on behalf of EREA, reviewing and managing the College's child protection policies and procedures, specifically the College's procedures for Detecting and Reporting Child Protection Incidents;
- inducting and managing the training of new staff and volunteers in the College's child protection policies and procedures, specifically our procedures for Detecting and Reporting Child Protection Incidents;
- providing all staff, Direct Contact Volunteers and Direct Contact Contractors with a copy of the College's Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and key contact numbers for reporting child protection concerns;
- where authority is delegated from the Headmaster, promptly managing the College's response to an allegation, disclosure or suspicion of abuse or grooming with the assistance of the Headmaster and senior staff members, and ensuring that the disclosure is taken seriously;
- promoting child protection issues within the College community and responding to general queries with respect to the College's Child Protection Program;
- acting as "Child Protection Champions" and ensuring a strong and sustainable child protection culture is embedded within the College;
- offering assistance and support when a member of the College community receives or makes a disclosure of abuse or grooming;
- developing processes for minor corrective issues that don't need to be reported to an outside authority; and
- if a Child Safety Officer cannot perform their role, for example, due to conflicts of interest or absence, these duties must be performed by another Child Safety Officer, or the Headmaster.

### **Our Senior Child Safety Officer**

David McFadden, Headmaster, is our Senior Child Safety Officer (Senior CSO). The Senior CSO has an important role in the implementation and operation of our Child Protection Program.

#### ***Key responsibilities of the Senior CSO include:***

- being the first point of contact for all child protection concerns or queries for the wider community;
- ensuring that other Child Safety Officers understand and comply with their key responsibilities;
- ensuring that all Child Safety Officers undergo appropriate annual training in the College's child protection policies and procedures, their legal responsibilities, and how to appropriately respond to child protection concerns and incidents;

- coordinating the College's response to child protection incidents in consultation with the EREA Regional Director; and
- ensuring that the College's child protection policies and procedures are effectively implemented and communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

### **Staff Responsibilities**

All staff are required to comply with our Child Protection Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse, grooming and neglect.

It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, neglect and grooming, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child protection with the Headmaster or Deputy Headmaster, and/or report to external agencies where required. Where a concern involves the Headmaster or Deputy Headmaster, staff should contact the EREA Regional Director via the EREA National Office at (03) 9426 3200.

Staff can also direct questions about child protection at the College to one of the College's Child Safety Officers.

Staff also, as a condition of employment at the College, must adhere to the EREA Child Safe Code of Conduct.

### **College Board Responsibilities**

Under the EREA governance structure, the EREA Board of Directors is responsible for working collaboratively with the Headmaster to ensure consistency and faithfulness to the Charter for Catholic Schools in the Edmund Rice Tradition and the Touchstones of Liberating Education, Gospel Spirituality, Inclusive Community, and Justice and Solidarity.

As part of this role, the College Board has responsibility for approving major College policies that are consistent with EREA policies.

The College Board also provides advice and support to the Headmaster on any matter referred to it by the Headmaster. The Headmaster has delegated authority from the EREA Executive Director for operational management of the College.

Responsibility for the day-to-day management and implementation of the College's child protection policies and procedures rests with the Headmaster.

### **Direct Contact Volunteers' Responsibilities**

Direct Contact Volunteers are those volunteers that are involved in providing support, guidance and supervision directly to students and could potentially have direct, unsupervised contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service.

#### **Direct Contact Volunteers may have:**

- limited supervision by College staff in their role;
- significant amounts of 1:1 time with students;
- supervisory responsibility of a group of students with only broad and indirect oversight of a College staff member; or
- full supervisory responsibility for one or more students, such as in a sports coaching role or learning support role.

Examples of Direct Contact Volunteer activities may include volunteers involved in College camps or excursions, coaching sporting teams or assisting in learning activities.

All Direct Contact Volunteers are required to adhere to our Statement of Commitment to Child Safety, the EREA Child Safe Code of Conduct, and our Child Protection Program.

They must also be aware that they too have legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse, neglect and grooming behaviours.

It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of abuse, neglect and grooming, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child protection with the Headmaster or Deputy Headmaster and/or report to external agencies where required. Where a concern involves the Headmaster or Deputy Headmaster, Direct Contact Volunteers should contact the EREA Regional Director via the EREA National Office at (03) 9426 3200.

Direct Contact Volunteers can also direct questions about child protection at the College to one of the College's Child Safety Officers.

### **Indirect Contact Volunteers' Responsibilities**

Indirect Contact Volunteers are those volunteers who are involved in providing support and services whilst not directly assisting a specific group of students.

Indirect Contact Volunteers are not responsible for supervising students and would not have "unsupervised" contact with

students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service.

Examples of Indirect Contact Volunteer activities may include assisting with College functions, the College canteen and fundraising or sporting event barbeques.

All Indirect Contact Volunteers are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in College environments.

All Indirect Contact Volunteers are required by the College to be familiar with our Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and EREA Child Safe Code of Conduct.

### **Third Party Contractors' Responsibilities**

All Third Party Contractors engaged by the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

Third Party Contractors include, for example, maintenance and building personnel, consultants, casual teachers, tutors, sports coaches and College cleaners. This also includes peripatetic music teachers and other extra-curricular teachers and instructors who are engaged by students and their families directly, rather than the College, but have an agreement with the College to use the College's facilities.

In this Child Protection Program, Third Party Contractors are classified as either "Direct Contact Contractors" or "Indirect Contact Contractors".

Where the term Third Party Contractor is used, it captures both "Direct Contact Contractors" and "Indirect Contact Contractors".

#### ***Direct Contact Contractors are:***

- those who have direct unsupervised contact with students during the normal course of their work;
- those who may be in a position to establish a relationship of trust with a student notwithstanding that unsupervised access to students would be rare (for example full-time maintenance personnel); and
- any contractors whom a college is legally required to screen.

Indirect Contact Contractors are those contractors who do not meet the definition of a "Direct Contact Contractor".

All service providers engaged by the College are required by the College to be familiar with our Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and our EREA Child Safe Code of Conduct.

Aquinas College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the Third Party Contractor.

### **External Education Providers' Responsibilities**

An External Education Provider is any organisation that the College has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the College. The delivery of such a course may take place on College premises or elsewhere.

All External Education Providers engaged by the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

All External Education Providers engaged by the College are required by the College to be familiar with our Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and our EREA Child Safe Code of Conduct, and are required to have appropriate child protection policies and procedures within their organisation.

Aquinas College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the External Education Provider.