



**St Dominic's Parish
East Camberwell**



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF MELBOURNE

Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

(As revised by Parish Safeguarding Committee 1 February 2022)

1. Background

St Dominic's Parish is committed to the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people. This commitment is founded in the mission of Jesus Christ; based on love, justice and the dignity of each human person.

The parish acknowledges that preventing child abuse requires a proactive approach including policies, procedures and practices. It has adopted a comprehensive child safety framework, which aims to prevent child abuse, empower children and young people, and respond to concerns, disclosures or allegations of child abuse or child-related misconduct.

2. Scope

This policy applies to clergy, employees and volunteers. It includes those working within Church properties (e.g. churches, parish halls, presbyteries) and those engaged in outreach activities (e.g. hospital, prison or home visits). It covers online environments and travel outside the Archdiocese whether local, interstate or overseas.

3. Policy Statement

St Dominic's Parish has zero tolerance for all forms of child abuse and maltreatment and is committed to protecting children and young people from harm.

3.1 Safeguarding responsibilities

Parish leadership is responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy. The St Dominic's Parish Safeguarding Committee will help the parish report to the Professional Standards Unit on an annual basis. All those who work or volunteer within the parish will be required to sign a Code of Conduct Declaration every three years acknowledging their responsibilities under the framework – a copy of this Declaration is at [Attachment 2](#).

3.2 Safe personnel – including Working With Children and Police Record checks.

The Archdiocese sets out selection, recruitment and screening processes that help determine whether someone is suitable to work with children and young people in ministry.

Contacts:

- www.stdominics.org.au/safety.html for policies and related documents on child safety
- Archdiocese Professional Standards Unit: tel 9926 5630, professional.standards@cam.org.au
- St Dominic's Parish Office tel 9912 6870 x3, email secretary@stdominics.org.au
- St Dominic's Parish Child Safety Contact Person tel 0418 136 372, safety@stdominics.org.au

All clergy, staff and volunteers in the parish are required to obtain a Working With Children Check (WWCC) prior to commencing work and to sign the Code of Conduct Declaration every three years¹.

Further, all clergy and employees at St Dominic’s must also obtain a Police Record Check, to be renewed every three years. Volunteers who are engaged in specific activities that pose a risk to children and young people must also obtain a police check. This includes the following activities:

- driving
- home visiting
- visiting special care facilities (e.g. refuges, hospitals, nursing homes)
- visits to community support agencies (e.g. disability support centres)
- overnight stays (e.g. camps, interstate or overseas trips)
- records and/or financial management with access to personal information about families, children and young people (e.g. name, address, date of birth, family circumstances).

Clergy, employees and volunteers must undertake induction activities that incorporate safeguarding awareness and promote the safe participation of children and young people.

The Parish will support and supervise all those working with children and young people to promote safety and detect behaviour that may be detrimental.

3.3 Safe programs, activities and events

The Parish will include children and young people in decision-making about programs, activities and events that affect them. We recognise the need to empower all children and young people, especially those at greater risk of abuse.

The Parish will engage parents as critical partners in promoting the safety of children and young people, particularly the parents and guardians of those who are more vulnerable to abuse.

The Parish employs a risk management approach that systemically identifies and assesses risk associated with programs, activities and events involving children and young people to minimise opportunities for harm to occur.

3.4 Responding to and reporting child abuse

Anyone who observes a child or young person in imminent danger should call Victoria Police on 000.

If any person believes that a criminal offence has been committed against a child or young person, they should call Victoria Police on 131 444 or report online- www.onlinereporting.police.vic.gov.au.

Any other concern about possible harm must be reported as soon as practicable to the Archdiocesan Professional Standards Unit (tel 9926 5630, psu@cam.org.au) and the parish – either the parish priest (tel 9912 6860, parish.priest@stdominics.org.au) or the Parish Child Safety Contact Person (tel 0418 136 372, safety@stdominics.org.au). All reports will be treated seriously and will be reported to the relevant statutory bodies. Clergy, employees and volunteers must make a report if they

¹ The text of the Code of Conduct Declaration is at [Attachment 2 to this document](#). [Attachment 3](#) sets out in detail the various volunteers and others required to sign the Code of Conduct Declaration and obtain the WWCC, and provides some detail on the process.)

reasonably believe that a child or young person has experienced abuse; or is at risk of harm from parish clergy, staff or a volunteer.

Further information about the role of the Professional Standards Unit is at [Attachment 5](#).

St Dominic’s Parish Pastoral Council dopted original text on 25 November 2020

This update adopted by Parish Safeguarding Committee, with participation of Parish Priest:
1 February 2022

Next review: 2024

4. Attachments

1. What is child abuse and mistreatment?
2. St Dominic’s Code of Conduct Declaration
3. Details of requirements to sign an annual Code of Conduct Declaration and obtain a Working With Children Check
4. Role of Archdiocesan Professional Standards Unit in relation to reporting of allegations of child abuse

Attachment 1: Child Abuse and Mistreatment

Child abuse is defined as an act that endangers a child or young person’s physical or emotional health or development. Allowing the health and development of the child or young person to be significantly impaired or placed at risk is also child abuse.

Abuse can take many forms, including

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse including grooming
- emotional abuse including spiritual abuse
- family violence
- neglect
- discrimination
- bullying

Signs and indicators of child abuse or maltreatment are not always obvious. Physical abuse may be more visible than other forms of abuse (e.g. bruising). Neglect is harder to identify as it consists of a failure to provide adequate care and attention. Likewise, you may not witness discrimination or bullying in relation to disability, mental illness, family violence, skin colour or race, gender identity or sexual orientation. However, it may result in signs or indicators in the child’s behaviour, for example social withdrawal and depression.

All children and young people are vulnerable but there are some children and young people who have an even higher risk of abuse than the general population. They are children who have experienced abuse before or who have a disability, are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those experiencing poverty or homelessness or out of home care. Similarly, the child safety needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are more acute due to a history of racism, marginalisation and dispossession.

Attachment 2: Code of Conduct Declaration (approved on 18 November 2020 by Parish Pastoral Council.)

[note: this text is also being revised – see separate document. This revision will be inserted into this policy document]

I declare that I will uphold the child safe standards of St Dominic’s Parish, and commit to:

Keeping children and young people safe from abuse and harm

- Ensure that physical contact is appropriate, non-intrusive and not sexual in nature.
- Use respectful language and tone when communicating with children and young people, and refrain from using language that is sexual, discriminatory or racist in nature.
- Not engage in any form of child abuse including emotional, physical and sexual abuse or neglect.
- Refrain from developing any relationships that might be seen as favouritism or amount to grooming.

Creating a physically and psychologically safe environment for children and young people

- Ensure children and young people in my care are appropriately supervised at all times.
- Ensure an adult is never alone with a child or young person: at least two adults must be present.
- Refrain from taking photos or video of children and young people without parental or guardian consent, and remove any photos from any personal device immediately after their use has been finalised.
- Use social media and digital communication in a safe and responsible manner.
- Act to remove and/or minimise any physical risks.
- Refrain from the consumption of alcohol or illicit drugs in front of children and young people (unless at an event for which the Parish Pastoral Council has approved the consumption of alcohol.)
- Not supply alcohol or drugs to children and young people.
- Immediately notify the Parish Priest if charged with or convicted of a criminal offence

Supporting cultural safety and inclusion

- Promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children and young people.
- Support the inclusion of all children and young people, irrespective of ethnicity, gender, age, disability and sexual orientation.

Promoting respectful relationships

- Engage in positive interactions that uphold the rights and dignity of children and young people.
- Listen to and respect the views of children and young people

Taking action to safeguard children and young people

- Listen and respond supportively to concerns children and young people might have about their safety.
- Call police on 000 if a child is in danger or a crime has been committed, and report any other child safety concerns, reports or disclosures to relevant authorities, as set out in the St Dominic’s Parish Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy www.stdominics.org.au/safety

Declaration

I agree to abide by this **Code of Conduct** when engaged with children and young people in St Dominic’s Parish. I understand that if I breach the code the Parish may have to inform civil and Church authorities.

Safeguarding Children and Young People – Policy

Name (please print)	Signature	Date	Contact details

Attachment 3 – Requirements to sign a Code of Conduct Declaration every three years and obtain a Working With Children Check

In accordance with Archdiocesan policy, the following people are required to sign the Code of Conduct Declaration every three years and to obtain a Working With Children Check:

- all clergy (bishop, parish priest, assistant priest, migrant chaplains, visiting clergy, priests in residence, supply clergy, deacons)
- Sisters, Brothers and Religious Priests holding an appointment from the Archbishop to undertake work in parish or Archdiocesan entities
- employees (including casual employees)
- lay ecclesiastical ministers including pastoral associates, those engaged in chaplaincy
- volunteers
- seminarians
- persons residing at the presbytery or on the grounds of the parish, agency or entity
- students on placement
- contractors who might be in proximity to children or young people)

In the parish context, volunteers is a broad category. It includes anyone who takes on a structured role within the parish, including

- readers and commentators at Mass
- leaders or assistants in children’s liturgy
- Altar servers or assistants
- Musicians at Mass or choir members
- youth group leaders or assistants
- members of the Parish Pastoral Council
- members of the Parish Finance Committee
- welcomers at Mass
- collectors at Mass
- officials or helpers at the St Dominic’s Tennis Club
- sanctuary carers
 - prayer writers
- organisers and members of parish groups, including
 - prayer groups
 - justice and peace group
 - Asylum Seeker support Group
 - Dominicare

This list will be kept up to date to ensure that all relevant parish groups are covered.

Detail of Parish Working With Children Check requirements

As noted, in addition to signing the Code of Conduct declaration every three years, all clergy,

staff and volunteers in St Dominic’s Parish are required to obtain a Working With Children Check (WWCC).

The rationale for this measure is that clergy, employees and volunteers represent the parish and hold a position of trust in our communities, irrespective of whether their role involves direct, indirect or no contact with children and young people. In acknowledging that children and young people often hold those who work or volunteer in parishes in high regard, there is a need to ensure that all who work or volunteer have been appropriately screened through the WWCC process. These requirements of the Archdiocese of Melbourne exceed the requirements of the WWCC legislation, but are adopted to reflect that we all stand united in creating safe environments for children and young people, and to demonstrate our commitment to excluding persons who pose an obvious risk to children and young people.

It is a requirement that clergy, employees and volunteers who do not have a current WWCC apply for a WWCC before commencing their roles – and are able to provide an application receipt as evidence that they have applied for a WWCC. The application process for a WWCC can be commenced online and finalised at a participating Australia Post Office - https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/individuals/applicants/how-toapply#Complete_online_application

If you already have a card, a copy of this needs to be provided to the parish office, where it will be entered into a confidential register. You are also required to update your WWCC online entry to list St Dominic’s Parish as a place where you volunteer.

There are limited circumstances where a WWCC is not required:

- Children under the age of 18 are exempt from the WWCC requirement unless they are supervising a person under the age of 15 in an employment situation and
- Unless they are involved in activities that are deemed to be high risk (which include home visiting, overnight stays, camps and overseas trips):
 - Interstate and overseas visitors are required to apply for a WWCC only if they are in ministry, working or volunteering in Victoria for a period that exceeds 5 days per calendar year.
 - People may engage in short-term or one-off volunteering or work within a parish for a period of up to 5 days in the same calendar year, providing that they are supervised or accompanied by someone who has been cleared with a WWCC.

Attachment 4: Professional Standards Unit’s role in relation to reports of alleged child-related misconduct and/or child abuse

The Professional Standards Unit is responsible for coordinating child-safety related misconduct and child abuse reports in relation to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and liaising with statutory authorities.

The Professional Standards Unit will be guided by the recommendations of Victoria Police and/or Child Protection in relation to any action that may be required to promote the safety of those involved and the integrity of the investigation process.

The Archdiocese has a legal responsibility under the Reportable Conduct Scheme to notify current and historical incidents of suspected child abuse or misconduct of clergy, employees and volunteers to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP)².

Serious misconduct and/or criminal behaviour will be reported to the Reportable Conduct Scheme (Commission for Children and Young People) and/or Victoria Police and be subject to internal investigation and disciplinary action (and/or administrative action subject to the requirements of Canon Law for members of the clergy).

Disciplinary action is determined by the seriousness of the misconduct.

Disciplinary action in the case of employees and volunteers may consist of:

- counselling
- training
- a verbal or written warning
- suspension (with or without pay)
- dismissal

In the case of clergy, disciplinary and/or administrative action will also be considered in accordance with Canon Law and may include:

- pastoral supervision
- counselling
- suspension of faculties

1. ² In Victoria, the following legislation governs how adults should respond to child abuse:

- The *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic) defines when a child is in need of protection (s 162) and the mandatory reporting obligations of certain professionals working in our community (ss 182, 184).
- The *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic) sets out the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
- The *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) creates the offences of ‘failure to protect’ (s 490) and ‘failure to disclose’ (s 327) which place additional legal responsibilities in relation to reporting, if a reasonable belief has been formed that a child or young person is at risk of or experiencing child sexual abuse.

- permanent removal of faculties
- recommendation to the Holy See for a penal precept or dismissal from the clerical state (laicisation)
- excommunication

Confidentiality and privacy in relation to reports of child abuse will be maintained consistent with the principles of natural justice and our duty of care to safeguard children and young people.

The safety and wellbeing of all parties involved will be considered and addressed as part of this process.