

Procedures for Managing Child Safety Incidents or Concerns at or Involving the College or its Staff Members

Introduction

For the purposes of this policy, we use the terms “staff” and “staff member” to include any adult who has a connection to the College. This includes all current or past teaching and non-teaching staff, College Council members, volunteers, contractors, professional service providers, other paid education and care participants, tertiary students and supervisors, and any other adult who has engaged with children and young people enrolled at the College.

Complaints involving:

- breaches of the Child Safe Codes of Conduct by current or former staff members, current or former students or other people on College premises or at College events
- conduct by a staff member that places **any** child or young person at risk, regardless of whether or not the child or young person is a student
- inappropriate behaviour or sexual misconduct by a staff member or by another person on College premises or at College events

are managed in a different way to other complaints received by the College. These kinds of complaints are instead managed using the same procedures that we use for managing incidents of or internal reports raised about this kind of behaviour.

This is because these kinds of incidents, complaints, allegations or concerns are all of a similar sensitive nature and raise potential privacy and confidentiality issues.

Child Safety Incidents or Concerns

We call **any** behaviour, that may be:

- a breach of our Child Safe Codes of Conduct or
- child abuse, grooming or other harm of a student

a “child safety incident or concern”.

It does not matter whether the behaviour is by a staff member, another student, a parent/carer or any other person on College premises or at College events.

Breaches of the Child Safe Codes of Conduct

St Martins Lutheran College requires all staff members, parents/carers, visitors and other adults in the College community to comply with our **Child Safe Adult Code of Conduct**.

Staff members must also comply with our **Staff and Student Professional Boundaries** policy.

Students must comply with our **Student Code of Conduct**.

Any breach of these Child Safe Codes of Conduct is considered a child safety incident.

Child Abuse, Grooming or Other Harm of a Student

Our child safe policies set out the different definitions and key indicators of child abuse, grooming and other harm of students. The following is covered by these definitions and indicators:

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- sexual abuse
- grooming and online grooming
- physical abuse or harm
- psychological or emotional abuse or harm
- neglect.

In addition to family members, other adults associated with a student can subject the student to these behaviours, including staff members, other students and other people on College premises or at College events.

Reportable Conduct

Where a child safety incident or concern involves or is alleged to involve behaviour by a staff member, we call this “reportable conduct.”

Not all physical contact, verbal communication and other behaviour of staff members is reportable conduct. Reasonable or accidental conduct is **not** reportable conduct.

Some examples of conduct that is **not** reportable conduct include a staff member touching a child on the arm to get their attention, guide them or comfort them, a teacher raising their voice to attract attention or restore order in a classroom, or conduct that is established to be accidental.

Child Safety Related Complaints

It is critical that the broader College community tells us about all child safety incidents or concerns that occur at or otherwise involve the College. This enables the College to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students and to comply with its legislative reporting obligations.

We call reports made to the College about child safety incidents or concerns at or involving the College or its staff members a child safety-related complaint.

Making a Child Safety-Related Complaint to the College

If you would like to make a complaint about:

- A breach of the Child Safe Codes of Conduct by current or former staff members, current or former students or other people on College premises or at College events
- conduct by a staff member that places **any** child or young person at risk, regardless of whether or not the child or young person is a student
- inappropriate behaviour or sexual misconduct by a staff member or by another person on College premises or at College events

you can do so by:

1. Sending an email to the Principal email: principal@stmartins.sa.edu.au
2. Writing a letter to the College addressed to Principal; 3 St Martins Drive, Mount Gambier SA 5290
3. Telephoning the College on 08 8725 1430 and asking to speak to the Principal

If the Principal is the subject of your complaint or allegation of misconduct or reportable conduct, please contact the College Council Chair email: collegechair@stmartins.sa.edu.au

Investigating and Managing Child Safety-related Incidents and Complaints

Immediate Actions

Depending on the nature of the incident, complaint, allegation or concern, after receiving the internal report or the child safety-related complaint, the College will obtain medical assistance for the student

and – if required by law or by our child safe policies and procedures – report the matter to the Department for Child Protection (DCP), the Police and/or other relevant external agencies.

The College will conduct an initial risk assessment in consultation – if an external report has been made – with the Police or DCP, to identify and mitigate any ongoing risks to student safety and wellbeing.

The College will also ensure that support is provided to any students, staff members and family members impacted by the incident, concern or complaint. In particular, we ensure that they are informed about advocacy and support services which may be available to assist them.

The Internal Investigation

The College will then conduct an internal investigation of the incident or complaint, led by the Principal or an external investigator.

However, if DCP or the Police are investigating the alleged conduct, that investigation takes precedence and the College's investigation will **only** proceed with their permission.

When conducting the internal investigation, the College follows the National Office of Child Safety's **Complaint Handling Guide: Upholding the Rights of Children and Young People**.

All internal investigations uphold the principles of procedural fairness and confidentiality – information is only shared with those who need to know.

Investigating and Managing Behaviour by a Student Against Another Student

Responding to this kind of child safety-related incident or complaint involves considering the College's duty of care both to any student who is a victim and to the student who is the alleged perpetrator, as well as to other students.

The Principal will follow our student discipline policies for these investigations.

Investigating and Managing Behaviour by Non-Staff Members on College Premises or at College Events

Where the child safety incident, or the child safety-related complaint, involves behaviour by a person who is neither a current or former College student nor a current or former staff member (for example they are a parent /carer or a visitor whose behaviour occurs on College premises or at a College event), the College's investigation is generally limited.

It may involve only the risk assessment and a subsequent review of our systems, policies and procedures to ensure future safety and wellbeing of our students.

Investigating and Managing Complaints about Reportable Conduct

Depending on the nature of the incident, complaint, allegation or concern about reportable conduct, the College may need to report the matter to additional external agencies, such as the Office of the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia, Catholic Education South Australia or the Teachers Registration Board of South Australia.

The steps that will be followed for reportable conduct investigations include:

- Planning the investigation (including planning the involvement of the child)
- Information gathering
- Staff member response
- Ensuring support during the investigation

- Making findings and determining outcomes/actions
- Taking action.

In addition, further risk assessments are conducted during the internal investigation and at the end of that investigation.

Record Keeping About Investigations

Records are kept at each step of the investigation process including:

- records received or created during investigations (such as notes of interviews and documents received)
- records of findings
- records of actions proposed and taken.

These are kept in a safe and secure location.

Reviews of Investigation Procedures and Outcomes

Internal Reviews

Staff members, students and parents/carers of students who are involved in the matter and who are not satisfied with an internal investigation or its outcome may request an internal review of:

- the procedures undertaken
- findings made
- disciplinary actions proposed or taken and/or
- other outcomes (including a decision not to make a finding or to take disciplinary or other action).

Requests for internal reviews should be made to the Principal email: principal@stmartins.sa.edu.au.

Disclosing Information to the College Community

The College will consult with any relevant external agencies (such as DCP or Police) to determine when, what and by whom information can be shared.

Sharing Information with Parents/Carers and Students

The parent/carer of a student who is an alleged victim of a child safety-related complaint, or any child safety incident or concern occurring at or involving the College, has a legitimate interest in being told that their child is an alleged victim and of the nature of the incident, complaint or allegation.

The parent/carer and student also has a legitimate interest in being informed of the process, progress and findings of any investigation, and of any action that might be taken after the investigation is completed.

However, special issues may arise that require an adjustment to normal information sharing practices. Legal impediments may impact the timeliness of disclosing information, the type or amount of information that is disclosed and to whom the information is disclosed, particularly in the case of reportable conduct allegations.

Sharing information with the wider College community

The College takes great care to assess the relevance and appropriateness of sharing information about a child safety incident or concern, or a child safety-related complaint, before providing any information about it to the wider College community. This is because even the confirmation of an incident or allegation can lead to the identification of a victim.

Information that may identify the victim of the incident, concern or complaint will not be shared with the wider College community without the consent of the victim and/or their parent/carer.

Where to Find More Information

For more information about our policies and procedures relating to the College's management of child safety incidents or concern occurring at or involving the College or its staff members, child safety-related complaints, or complaints handling generally, please contact The Complaints Manager email: complaints@stmartins.sa.edu.au