![Mercy Education logo]

Board of Directors

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MERCY EDUCATION
CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Introduction:
Mercy Education Limited (Mercy Education) has a zero tolerance for all forms of child abuse. Mercy Education has an over-arching commitment to ensure that its students are safe and secure while fostering their growth in a faith-centred community. Child safety and wellbeing are at the core of its mission and operations and its schools promote inclusive and welcoming learning environments. Mercy Education facilitates and ensures the implementation of child protection policies and codes of conduct across all its schools and throughout the organisation, in accordance with relevant state legislation, federal legislation and diocesan regulations.

Purpose:
The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the commitment of Mercy Education to safeguarding children in its leadership, governance and culture.

Mercy Education will facilitate the implementation of the Child Protection Policy across the Mercy schools and throughout the organisation as a part of its governance responsibility.

Definitions:
Child: a child or a young person enrolled as a student at a Mercy Education school. A child is a person under the age of 18 years or as defined according to applicable legislation. Enrolled students over the age of 18 years are not included in the definition of a child.

Child safety: matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

Employee: teaching staff, operational staff and contractors working at Mercy Education schools, and all staff working at the Mercy Education office.

Learning environment: any physical or virtual space made available or authorised by Mercy Education for use by a child including a school campus, on-line school environments (including email and intranet systems) and other locations provided by the schools for use by children (including but not limited to school camps, sporting events, excursions, interstate and overseas tours).

Parent: all those in a parenting capacity of a student, prospective student or past student, including carers, guardians, and natural, step, family care giver, or adoptive parents.

Policy Coverage:
This policy is relevant to the Directors of the Board, to all employees of Mercy Education and its schools, parents, volunteers and the wider school communities. The policy is also relevant to young people at Mercy schools aged 18 years and older.

Policy Statement:

01 Mercy Education has a zero tolerance to all forms of child abuse and is committed to safeguarding children.

02 Mercy Education is committed to meeting nationally consistent child safe standards whilst operating in different states and diocesan jurisdictions.

03 All children regardless of their age, gender, race, religious beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, cultural, social or economic background, have the right to personal safety, including safety in relationships and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect.

04 Mercy Education pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with a disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children who are vulnerable including those who are unable to live at home and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people.

05 Mercy Education has a responsibility to ensure that appropriate policies, procedures and guidelines are in place to assist its employees and school communities to provide safe, secure and nurturing learning environments.

06 Mercy Education has codes of conduct that describe the expected attitudes and appropriate behaviours for its employees, volunteers, parents and wider school communities.

07 Mercy Education has risk management strategies which focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children and young people in physical and virtual environments, and on regular monitoring of bullying (including cyberbullying) and other harmful or inappropriate behaviours.

08 Mercy Education ensures that thorough and rigorous practices are applied in the recruitment, screening and induction practices for employees and volunteers.

09 Mercy Education ensures that employees and volunteers understand their obligations on information sharing, record keeping and reporting of child abuse allegations. As a part of its governance responsibility, Mercy Education expects that all significant incidents or other child safety issues related to Mercy schools should be brought to its attention.

10 Mercy Education ensures that employees and volunteers undertake regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to child safety and the wellbeing of students. Ongoing employee support, supervision and performance appraisal processes include child safety elements.

11 Children and young people are informed of the commitment of Mercy Education to child safety and wellbeing and of their own rights as individuals. They access age appropriate information and programs, are taught to recognise safe physical and virtual environments and understand protective strategies.

12   Mercy Education has effective complaint handling processes that are culturally safe and understood by children and young people, employees, families and volunteers.

13   Mercy Education seeks to continuously improve child safe practices, policies and procedures in order to respond to the needs of its schools and communities.

14   Mercy Education will include children and young people in the development of literature, policies and presentations that explain its commitment to the safety, inclusion and wellbeing of children and young people.

Related Documents:
Mercy Education Charter
Mercy Education Code of Conduct
Mercy Education Parent Code of Conduct: Respectful Relationships
AHRC: National Principles for Child Safe Organisations https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights/national-principles-child-safe-organisations
Catholic Professional Standards Limited https://www.cpsltd.org.au/
Diocesan Child protection policies:
•   Catholic Education Ballarat https://ceob.edu.au/publications/child-protection/
•   Catholic Education Melbourne https://www.cem.edu.au/Our-Schools/Child-Safety.aspx
•   Catholic Education Sandhurst https://www.ceosand.catholic.edu.au/child-safety
•   Catholic Education South Australia https://www.cesa.catholic.edu.au/our-schools/safe-environments-for-all
•   Catholic Education Western Australia https://www.cewa.edu.au/learning-and-wellbeing/wellbeing-and-safety/student-safety/

Review History:

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1.0	27/03/20	February 2023	Head of People and Culture	MEL Board