



DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND EQUITY POLICY

1. Purpose

This policy will provide guidelines to:

- 1.1 ensure all adults and students at St Catherine's School and in the School Boarding House, are treated equitably and with respect, regardless of their background, ethnicity, culture, language, beliefs, gender identity, age, socioeconomic status, level of ability, additional needs, family structure or lifestyle;
- 1.2 promote inclusive practices and ensure the successful participation of all students at St Catherine's School;
- 1.3 create a positive mental health and wellbeing environment for children, educators, staff and families at St Catherine's School;
- 1.4 eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation, to the greatest extent possible.

2. Scope

This policy applies to School Council members, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, students and others attending the programs and activities of St Catherine's School, the School Boarding House and the extended School Environment – (refer to Definition of School Environment).

3. Definitions

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Person: This term is used to refer to a person who:

- is a descendant of the First Peoples of Australia
- identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person
- is accepted by the community in which they live as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.

Additional needs: A broad term relating to challenges experienced across a number of areas including physical health, mental health, disability, developmental concern, or emotional need (resulting from trauma, abuse or grief), family displacement (due to war or refugee status), domestic violence, mental illness, family separation or divorce, which affects a person's ability to participate or learn.

Culture: The values and traditions of groups of people that are passed from one generation to another.



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Cultural safety: An environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening.¹ For Aboriginal children, cultural safety has been defined as 'the child being provided with a safe, nurturing and positive environment where they are comfortable with being themselves, expressing their culture ... their spiritual and belief systems, and they are supported by the carer ... (who) respects their Aboriginality and therefore encourages their sense of self and identity'.²

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD): Refers to individuals and groups who are from diverse racial, religious, linguistic and/or ethnic backgrounds.

Disability: In relation to a person, refers to:

- a sensory, physical or neurological impairment or acquired brain injury, or any combination thereof, that:
 - a) is, or is likely to be, permanent, and
 - b) causes a substantially reduced capacity in at least one of the areas of self-care, self-management, mobility or communication, and
 - c) requires significant ongoing or long-term episodic support, and
 - d) is not related to ageing, or
- an intellectual disability, or
- a developmental delay (*Disability Act 2006 (Vic)*).

Diversity: Refers to all characteristics that make individuals different from one another, including race, religion, language, ethnicity, beliefs, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, level of ability, additional needs, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, personality, marital and/or parental status, family structure, lifestyle and general life/work experience.

Equity: (In the context of human rights) is the behaviour of acting in a fair and just manner towards others.

Inclusion: The engagement and involvement of children and families to ensure that all individuals have an equal opportunity to participate and achieve their maximum potential.

Mental health: The *Equal Opportunity Act* recognises *mental health* conditions as a disability and provides protection from discrimination.

Out-of-Home Care: Is the term used in Victoria when a child or young person is placed in care away from their parents. It includes placement in-kinship care, home-based care such as foster care and residential care. For these students, the State of Victoria may be their legal parent, and with this comes the responsibilities of a parent to care for and protect them, and to ensure that they have access to all the services they need for their immediate and longer-term benefit.

¹ Australian Human Rights Commission, [Social Justice Report 2011](#)

² SNAICC, [Cultural safety](#), 2021.



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Racism: a phenomenon that results in avoidable and unfair inequalities in power, resources or opportunities across groups in society, based on race, ethnicity, culture or religion. Racism can be expressed through beliefs, prejudices or behaviours / practices. Racism is about unfair actions, regardless of whether these actions are intended or not (Paradies 2006).

Race-based discrimination: behaviours or practices that result in avoidable and unfair inequalities across groups in society based on race, ethnicity, culture or religion (Paradies et al. 2009).

Direct discrimination: unequal treatment that results in unequal power, resources or opportunities across different groups (Paradies et al. 2009).

Indirect discrimination: equal treatment that results in unequal power, resources or opportunities across different groups (Paradies et al. 2009).

School Environment: Any physical or virtual place made available or used by the school during or outside school hours, including:

- a) the main campus of the school situated at 17 Heyington Place, Toorak;
- b) the school's Boarding premises – Illawarra – situated in the main campus;
- c) online or virtual school environments made available or used by the school for use by students (including email, intranet systems, software applications, collaboration tools and online services); and
- d) other locations provided by the school or through a third-party provider for a child or student to use including, but not limited to, locations used for:
 - (i) camps
 - (ii) approved homestay accommodation
 - (iii) delivery of education and training such as registered training organisations, TAFEs, non-school senior secondary providers or another school; or
 - (iv) sporting events, excursions, competitions, or other events.

4. Policy Statement

4.1 Statement of Commitment to Diversity, Inclusion and Equity

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all. Inclusion at St Catherine's School involves upholding equity and supporting children's social, cultural and linguistic diversity (including abilities, disabilities, gender identity, family circumstances, cultural heritage and geographic location).



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We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of students in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal students
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- students with disabilities
- students unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) students
- international students
- boarders

4.2 **Statement of Commitment to the Cultural Safety of Aboriginal Students³:**

St Catherine's School and Boarding House is committed to creating a culturally sensitive and safe environment for all students and we respect the unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. St Catherine's is committed to 'Closing the Gap' and acknowledges Australia is a nation of great diversity, and an ancient land that has been cared for by Indigenous Australians for many thousands of years. The School accepts that it has a shared responsibility to support children, families, colleagues and the local community to understand, respect and value diversity and the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices.

We recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

Strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community include the School's *Reconciliation Action Plan*, which outlines the implementation of the School's aims to encourage students to express their culture and cultural rights, as well as educating all students in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture. Other measures include staff training in cultural competence and developing links with local elders, Aboriginal organisations and families.

St Catherine's School is committed to:

- 4.3 encouraging and supporting each student's ability to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights;
- 4.4 acknowledging and respecting the rights of all students to learn in a safe and caring environment where diversity is respected and celebrated;

³ The term 'Aboriginal' in this policy is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



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- 4.5 creating an environment that supports, reflects and promotes equitable and inclusive behaviours and practices;
- 4.6 encouraging all students to celebrate their identity, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTQI+) students, and prohibiting any conduct by school staff of inducing a student to change or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity. (Please refer to *Gender Identity Policy*);
- 4.7 creating a sense of belonging for all students, families and staff, where diverse identities, backgrounds, experiences, skills and interests are respected, valued and given opportunities to be expressed/developed;
- 4.8 ensuring that programs are reflective of, and responsive to, the values and cultural beliefs of families and of those within the local community and broader society;
- 4.9 working to ensure students are not discriminated against on the basis of background, ethnicity, culture, language, beliefs, gender identity, age, socioeconomic status, health status, level of ability or additional needs, family structure or lifestyle;
- 4.10 considering the mental health and wellbeing needs of all students, families and staff;
- 4.11 providing staff professional development and the cultural competency to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal students;
- 4.12 maintaining policies and procedures that ensure racism is identified, confronted and not tolerated. Any instances of racism are addressed with appropriate consequences in accordance with the *Anti Bullying and Harassment Policy* and *Student Behaviour Management Policy*;
- 4.13 Actively supporting and facilitating participation and inclusion in the school by Aboriginal children, young people and their families;
- 4.14 Reviewing policies, procedures, systems and processes to ensure they create a culturally safe and inclusive environment and meet the needs of Aboriginal children, young people and their families, including access to support and complaints processes in easily understood language and format.

5. Procedure

The Principal is responsible for:

- ensuring that school programs are available and accessible to families from a variety of backgrounds and are inclusive of all students with medical conditions;



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- implementing appropriate programs and practices to support vulnerable students and their families, including working co-operatively with relevant services and/or professionals, where required;
- ensuring that educational programs delivered in accordance with an approved learning framework, are based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each student, and pay particular attention to the individual differences of each student;
- encouraging collaborative practice which facilitates inclusion and active participation;
- providing families with information about the support options available students attending St Catherine's School;
- ensuring that the enrolment process is fair and equitable;
- tailoring the orientation process to meet the individual needs of students and their families;
- identifying the barriers to participation programs and activities, and developing strategies to overcome these barriers;
- ensuring that facilities are designed or adapted to support access by every student, family, educator and staff member, including adaptive equipment to support inclusion;
- ensuring that staff have access to appropriate and accredited professional development activities that promote a positive understanding of diversity, inclusion and equity, and mental health and wellbeing, and provide skills to assist in implementing this policy;
- ensuring that staff are aware of the school's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour when working with students and their families;
- providing information in various community languages wherever possible;
- using language services to assist with communication where required and considering the employment of a multilingual worker/s to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families;
- working with educators to ensure appropriate program planning and resourcing for students with additional needs;
- where practicable, accessing resources, support and professional development to facilitate inclusion of students with additional needs;
- ensuring collaborative relationships with specialised services and professionals to provide support and services for families and their children with a disability or complex medical needs;
- ensuring that no employee, prospective employee, parent/guardian, child, young persons, volunteer or student at the school is discriminated against;
- ensuring that any behaviour or circumstances that may constitute discrimination or prejudice are dealt with in an appropriate manner;
- ensuring there are clear referral options and pathways for students, staff, educators and families to access support services for mental health and wellbeing;
- ensuring that educators and staff are supported to learn about and care for their own mental health and wellbeing;
- ensuring that mental health and wellbeing information and policy requirements are included in educator and staff induction;



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- ensuring that leadership practices and on-the-ground support enable a work environment that minimises stress and promotes mental health and wellbeing for educators and staff;
- ensuring that all policies of St Catherine's School, including the *Privacy Policy*, are adhered to at all times;
- ensuring that any behaviour or circumstances that may constitute discrimination or prejudice are dealt with in an appropriate manner (refer to *Complaints and Grievances Policy*).

Educators and all other staff are responsible for:

- supporting the participation and inclusion of all students in the program at the school;
- being aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour when working with students and families;
- working collaboratively with other staff, parents/guardians, specialist services and professionals to implement the program at the school and provide individualised support for students, where required;
- delivering an educational program that is reflective of the school's values, beliefs and philosophy, and embraces the principles of fairness, equity, diversity and inclusion;
- embedding social and emotional learning in the service program and practice, and teaching students to care for their own mental health;
- providing a range of opportunities in the outdoor and indoor spaces and the natural environment, for all students to engage in physical, explorative and creative experiences;
- encouraging and supporting other educators, staff and families as role models to demonstrate positive and respectful relationships, and positive mental health and wellbeing;
- undertaking appropriate, accredited professional development to support the inclusion of all students;
- using language services to assist with communication, where required;
- understanding and respecting different cultural child-rearing and social practices;
- notifying the Leadership team of any behaviour or circumstances that may constitute discrimination or prejudice;
- discussing any concerns regarding individual students with a Leadership team member, and parents/guardians;
- responding to the needs and concerns of parents/guardians, and providing support and guidance, where appropriate;
- reviewing and evaluating individualised support programs in consultation with all people involved in the student's education and care;
- critically reflecting on practice to ensure that interactions and programs embrace an approach in which children and families feel valued and respected, and that their contributions are welcomed
- adhering to the policies of St Catherine's School, including the *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*, at all times.



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Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- adhering to the policies of St Catherine's School, including this *Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Policy*, the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*, the *Child Safe Code of Conduct*, the *Community Code of Conduct* and the *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*, at all times;
- communicating with the School to ensure awareness of their child's specific needs;
- raising any issues or concerns regarding their child's participation in the program;
- responding to requests from educators for written permission to arrange for an assessment or collect reports on their child from service providers;
- being involved in, keeping fully informed about, and providing written consent for any individualised intervention or support proposed/provided for their child.

6. Review

This Policy has been endorsed by the School Council.

This policy will be reviewed for effectiveness:

- As part of St Catherine's School policy review schedule (every 2 years);
- As required, with changes to current legislation, research, policy and best practice;
- Following issues raised through the Complaints and Grievances Policy;
- After any significant child safety incident; and
- Upon receipt of staff and parent/guardian feedback.

7. Resources

SNAICC, [Cultural safety](#), 2021.

Centre for Multicultural Youth '[Schools Standing up to Racism](#)'

LEAD (*Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity*) School Based Audit

8. Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Age Discrimination Act 2004
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Charter for Children in Out-of-home Care (Vic)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Safe Standards (Vic)
- Dardee Boorai: the Victorian Charter of Safety and Wellbeing for Aboriginal Children and Young People (Vic)
- Disability Act 2006 (Vic)



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- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
- Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (Vic)
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)

9. Related Policies

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Child Safety Code of Conduct Policy

Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy

Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations and Procedures Policy

Anti Bullying and Harassment Policy

Gender Identity Policy

Anaphylaxis Policy

Asthma Policy

Student Behaviour Management Policy

Complaints and Grievances Policy

Enrolment Policy

Privacy Policy

Staff Code of Conduct Policy