

Child Safe Standard 1

“Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.”

As Catholic educators, we have a moral, mission-driven and legal responsibility to uphold and actively promote the wellbeing and safety of every student entrusted in our care. Our commitment to the protection of students is enabled in nurturing, respectful and safe communities where the uniqueness and sacred dignity of every young person are celebrated, and they can flourish in their learning and development.

What is Cultural Safety?

When we refer to Cultural Safety we refer to:

- The provision of **safe, nurturing and positive** learning environments,
- Where students are **comfortable** with being themselves,
- Are free to **express** their culture, their spiritual and belief systems,
- Are knowingly supported by a school community that **respects** and **encourages** their sense of self and identity.

Cultural safety goes beyond inclusion; it requires a zero tolerance for racism, active listening, ongoing reflection and continued respect.

The Impact

When student feel culturally safe, they:

- Build **stronger connections** and **trust with the school community**
- Experience **improved wellbeing** and **mental health**
- **Engage more deeply** in learning and in leadership areas
- **Express** and **celebrate** their unique identities with pride.

Note: The term 'Aboriginal' includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is important to be respectful of how individual children, students, their families and community refer to themselves and use appropriate language when referring to individuals or communities.

When schools build respect, inclusion, and a strong understanding of cultural identity, they create culturally safe environments where students can **flourish** in their learning, relationships and emotional wellbeing.

What Schools Can Do

- **Build Knowledge:** Encourage respectful understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories across learning areas and include it in school planning days where possible
- **Recognise Key Dates:** Hold ceremonies and events to celebrate and recognise key dates and anniversaries e.g. NAIDOC Week & Reconciliation Week
- **Engage with the Community:** Partner with Aboriginal communities, Elders and families to shape the learning journey for all students and staff
- **Uplift School Environments:** Proudly display Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags wherever there is an Australian flag. Display and learn the meaning of Aboriginal artwork, language, and consider including student voice in this process.
- **Review Policies:** Ensure anti-racism, inclusion, and respect are clearly reflected in school policies
- **Speak Up:** Actively address racism if it is observed from students, staff, volunteers or visitors.

Still have questions about Child Safe Standard 1?

Check out the frequently asked questions section on pages 3 – 4 or visit the MACS Care microsite for comprehensive guidance.

Need further assistance?

Email the Child Safety Team at MACS: childsafety@macs.vic.edu.au

Reflect and Grow: School Staff

- How do students see their cultures reflected around the school? **List 2-3 examples you see today.**
- Are you confident to talk about cultural diversity?
- What have **you** learned recently that can make its way into your classroom?
- How does your school **challenge racism**?
- Are there safe and open spaces to **speak up**?
- How are Aboriginal student and families helping **shape** your school and community?
- What decision-making spaces **include** them?



Frequently Asked Questions

There are no children or young people who identify as Aboriginal at our school, does this standard apply?

- Yes - there may be Aboriginal children, young people and/or their families who have not chosen to inform you or your school about their cultural identity. There may be multiple reasons for this. Cultural safety includes creating an environment in which people feel safe to identify and express their culture. This extends to future enrolment of students.

Our school review is upcoming, or we have had our review with areas to improve – what MACS Care resources can assist me?

- We recommend utilising our compliance tool to assist in preparing for review, maintaining minimum standards

I don't know where to start with building on CSS1 within our school:

- There are several resources available to assist with implementing this standard or, building on what you have already started at your school. A good place to start is the **MACS Care dedicated microsite**, which can be accessed through CEVN. Several pre-populated templates have been created to assist you on this journey.

I thought treating everyone equally was the right thing to do. Is Child Safe Standard 1 asking me to treat Aboriginal children and young people differently?

CCYP FAQ's 'questions about cultural safety':

- "Most of us think that if we treat everyone equally, with respect and fairness, then everyone will get the same outcomes. This is a good way to behave, but not all people and communities have been treated with respect and fairness. This has created different experiences and inequality between people and communities".
- "Cultural safety involves understanding that, historically, Aboriginal people did not have the same opportunities as non-Aboriginal people in Australia, and so, especially for Aboriginal children and young people, we need to think about things from their perspectives. What do they need to make sure they have a positive experience? This might necessarily mean doing things a little differently for them".
- "While we can treat everyone the same, or equally, it might not achieve an equitable outcome. To get an equitable outcome, we need to consider what individuals need and respond accordingly".

How can parent/cares get involved?

- MACS Care has a parent/carer newsletter that can be utilised to engage families. Parents/carers are in a unique position to share what helps their children feel proud of their culture, speak up when if they see unacceptable behaviour. Parents/carers are encouraged to join in on school events that celebrate Aboriginal culture and provide feedback on how schools can continue to improve in this area.

What can schools do to address racism?

- Schools can lead by example the behaviour expected to be seen in their students. Schools may further monitor social media for signs of hate speech and respond quickly in accordance with relevant policies and procedures.

'Cultural safety is a journey. It will take time so come into it with an open mind and willingness to learn in a range of ways. Mistakes might be made and that's ok so long as they were done with good intentions.'

– Neville Atkinson, Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc.

Additional Resources:

- Traditional Owners of the land your school is on for guidance and potential involvement. Ensuring local voices are heard first is essential
- [Koori Curriculum](#)
- [Koori Heritage Trust](#)
- [Yoorrook Justice Commission](#)
- [Aboriginal Catholic Ministry Victoria](#)
- [Narragunnawall](#)
- [Opening The Doors Foundation](#)
- [AIATSIS: Map of Indigenous Australia](#)
- [Magabala Books](#)
- [CCYP: 'Understanding Cultural Safety for Aboriginal Children and Young People: A guide for implementing Child Safe Standard 1'](#)

