Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools

MACS CARE

Fact Sheet & FAQs

Child Safe Standard 7

"Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused."

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 includes ensuring that children, families and community members can raise complaints and concerns safely, are listened to respectfully, and understand how to access child-focused complaint processes that prioritise children's voices and wellbeing.
Our Catholic communities uphold clear, accessible and child-centred policies and procedures for responding to complaints and concerns, supporting staff and volunteers to act promptly, lawfully and with integrity so that child safety and wellbeing are central to every response.

Why Standard 7 matters

Children and young people have the right to be **heard, believed, and responded to** when they raise complaints or concerns about their safety or wellbeing. Child Safe Standard 7 recognises that child safety depends not only on preventing harm, but on how organisations **listen and respond** when concerns arise. **Clear, accessible, and child-focused complaint processes** help ensure that children feel safe to speak up and trust that adults will act in their best interests.

Grounded in our Catholic mission, this standard reflects our responsibility to **seek justice, protect dignity, and respond with care and integrity**. When complaints and concerns are handled respectfully, promptly, and transparently, schools strengthen trust, accountability, and a culture where children's voices are **valued and safeguarded**.

The Impact

When complaints and concerns are handled through child-focused, accessible, and culturally safe processes, children and young people:

- Feel safe to raise concerns knowing they will be **listened to and taken seriously**
- Experience **respectful and supportive** responses that prioritise their wellbeing and dignity
- Develop **trust** in adults and **confidence** that the school will act to protect them
- Are better **supported** through early identification and response to safety or wellbeing issues
- Learn that speaking up is valued and contributes to **safer, fairer school communities**.

When schools create clear, child-focused processes for raising and responding to complaints and concerns, they honour the sacred dignity and voice of every child. This commitment reflects our call to seek justice and act with care, strengthens trust across the school community, and ensures concerns are addressed promptly and responsibly, creating environments where children feel safe, heard, and are supported to flourish.

Working together for Child Safety

Play your part
visit: care.macs.vic.edu.au

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What Schools Can Do

- **Ensure accessible and child-friendly complaint processes**: develop, communicate and regularly review clear complaint handling policies that are easy for children, families, staff, and volunteers to understand and access.
- **Listen and respond with care**: take all complaints and concerns seriously, respond promptly, and prioritise the safety, wellbeing and voice of the child in every response.
- **Support staff to act confidently and lawfully**: provide guidance, training, and clear reporting pathways so staff understand their responsibilities, including when and how to escalate concerns.
- **Promote a culture of speaking up**: encourage children, families, and staff to raise concerns without fear, reinforcing that safeguarding is a shared responsibility across the community.

Still have questions about Child Safe Standard 7?
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 our responses to concerns show children that they are **listened to and believed**?
- How confident am I in explaining and using our **complaint handling processes**?
- What helps **children and families feel safe** to raise concerns in our school?
- How do I ensure my responses are **calm, respectful, and child-focused**?
- How do our Catholic values of **justice, dignity, and care** guide the way we respond to complaints and concerns?



Frequently Asked Questions

What is Child Safe Standard 7 about?

Child Safe Standard 7 focuses on ensuring that complaints and concerns are handled through processes that are child-focused, accessible, and culturally safe. It applies to all concerns about child safety, wellbeing, or inappropriate behaviour (by staff, volunteers, community members, other students) and requires schools to respond promptly, fairly, and transparently while prioritising the best interests of the child.

What does "child-focused" mean in practice?

Being child-focused means listening carefully to children, taking their concerns seriously, and responding in ways that prioritises their safety, wellbeing, and dignity. It includes using age-appropriate language, providing reassurance, involving children appropriately in decisions that affect them, and ensuring they understand what will happen next.

What should I do if a child, parent, or colleague raises a concern?

All concerns must be taken seriously. Staff should listen calmly, reassure the person raising the concern, and follow the school's complaint and reporting procedures. Concerns should be documented and shared with the appropriate leader or child safety officer promptly. Acting early helps protect children and supports fair and thorough responses. A reminder that it is essential never to promise confidentiality in relation to a complaint or concern, as information may need to be shared on a strictly need-to-know basis to ensure appropriate action and support.

What should we do if the complaints process feels like it is being overused?

It is important to remember that a well-functioning complaints process is designed to be accessible. An increase in reports or complaints does not automatically indicate a problem with staff practice, it can also reflect growing trust in the system and confidence that concerns will be heard.

How do we determine if a complaint is "real" or malicious?

The starting point is that all complaints must be treated as genuine until assessed through a fair and structured process. It is not the role of individual staff members to decide whether a complaint is "real," exaggerated, mistaken, or malicious. Our responsibility is to respond consistently, document appropriately, and allow established procedures to determine the facts. If there are indicators that a complaint may be deliberately false or vexatious, this should be assessed by senior leadership through documented process and not informally or emotionally. Allegations of malicious intent require strong evidence and careful handling.

In child-safe organisations, the emphasis is not on determining whether a complaint is "real" at the outset, but on ensuring it is handled fairly, objectively, and in accordance with policy. The integrity of the process protects both students and staff.



Frequently Asked Questions (cont.)

How are staff supported to manage complaints and concerns under CSS 7?

Schools support staff through clear complaint-handling policies, defined reporting pathways, training, and access to leadership guidance. Staff are supported to document concerns, share information appropriately, and escalate matters when required, ensuring responses are lawful, consistent, and child-centred.

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How does CSS 7 connect to our Catholic identity?

Child Safe Standard 7 reflects our Gospel call to seek justice, protect the vulnerable, and act with compassion and integrity. Responding to complaints and concerns in a child-focused way honours the sacred dignity of every child and strengthens trust within our school communities. Safeguarding through just and caring responses is both a moral responsibility and an expression of our Catholic mission.

MACS documents to support CSS 7:

- **Complaints Handling Policy for MACS Schools**
- **Complaints Handling Policy – template for schools**
- **Complaints Handling Procedures - template for schools**
- **Child Safety Code of Conduct**
- **Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy**
- **Compliance Toolkit CSS 7**
- **Child Safety Risk Register**

