



St. Thomas' Primary School

VRQA
Last Reviewed: February 2018
Next Review: February 2021

Child Safe Standards: Identifying, Reducing and Removing risks of Child Abuse

RATIONALE:

Central to the mission of St. Thomas' Primary School is an unequivocal commitment to fostering the dignity, self-esteem and integrity of children and young people. We are committed to providing them with a safe, supportive and enriching environment that supports and encourages holistic education - allowing young people to develop academically, spiritually, physically, emotionally and socially.

INTRODUCTION:

The Child Safe Standards: Standard 6 requires the school governing authority to develop, implement, monitor and review risk management strategies to ensure effective policy, procedures and practices for child safety in the school environment. The standard has five specific requirements:

1. The school governing authority must develop and implement risk management strategies regarding child safety in school environments.
2. The school's risk management strategies regarding child safety must identify and mitigate the risk(s) of child abuse in school environments while remaining cognizant of the local characteristics of the school and its community.
3. If the school governing authority identifies risks of child abuse occurring in one or more school environments. These risks must be recorded and the actions that the school is taking to reduce or remove the risk documented.
4. The school must monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls.
5. At least annually, the school governing authority must ensure that appropriate guidance and training is provided to all members of the school staff and leadership about:
 - (i) Individual and collective responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse;
 - (ii) Child abuse risks in school environments;
 - (iii) The school's current child safety standards.

DEFINITION

Risk Management

A risk is defined as the effect, positive or negative, of uncertainty on the vision, strategic directions and operations of the school (*adapted from Guide for managing risk in not-for-profit organizations, 2010, Standards Australia*). Risk management is a coordinated approach to identifying risks that may occur in the organization, leadership and stewardship of the school. Risk management recognizes that there is always an element of risk (positive or negative potential) in the operations of the school and, with that, there is a governance responsibility to have policy, processes and practices to minimize or remove potential risks.

DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF RISK MANAGEMENT AT ST. THOMAS' SCHOOL

The scope of risk management includes:

- welfare and safety of staff, students, parents or wider community
- learning outcomes of students
- reputation or viability of St. Thomas' School and its Catholic identity
- exposure to potential serious legal issues
- achievement of diocesan, government and community expectations in the operation of St. Thomas' School as a Catholic organization, an educational provider and a place of employment.

Risk Management Culture

Underpinning effective risk management is a strong commitment from school leadership in minimizing or removing risks effectively. This is often seen as accountability or compliance. Risk management is focused on maintaining high standards in resource and policy stewardship that includes: the physical environment; the safety of staff, students, parents and visitors and; educational standards and policies that are vital for an effective functioning Catholic school. While establishing a risk register is essential, it is important that risk management is incorporated into the leadership and stewardship functions of the school.

At St. Thomas' School, an effective Risk Management culture is reflected in:

- collaboration through school and system partnership
- sustained commitment from school governance to risk management
- strategic focus on improving learning outcomes within a safe environment
- commitment to accountability of diocesan and government requirements and community expectations
- forward thinking and proactive approach to stewardship
- management of risk, cost, resources and the anticipated benefits
- contingency planning to prevent the school's vision and Catholic identity being undermined
- strategic process for assessing, monitoring and reporting risk
- shared responsibility for risk management by all in the school community.

Risk Management and Child Safety

Child safety-encompasses 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.

The St. Thomas' School risk management policy, procedures and practices for child safety identify and treat risk(s) of child abuse in this school environment by taking into account the:

- nature and context of the St. Thomas' School environment (on-site, off-site, on-line)
- interactions and activities conducted within each environment
- activities expected to be conducted in that environment (including the provision of services by volunteers, contractors or outside organisations)
- characteristics and needs of all children expected to be present in that environment
- assessment of risks and the actions that St. Thomas' School will take to reduce (mitigate) or remove risks (risk controls)
- maintenance the risk register, and where applicable, development of a risk treatment plan
- processes for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the risk management process.

Effective risk management also requires regular training of staff in its significance, purpose and process, and assist in its ongoing development and implementation. Risk management should be part of induction for all staff. Ministerial Order 870 (12.5) (2015) states that at least annually to '*...individual members of the school governing authority and school staff.*

Child Protection Officers

At St. Thomas' School, the following staff member have been appointed as Child Protection Officer (CPO):

- **Mr. Andrew McCombe**

Developing a Risk Management Process at St. Thomas' School

There is a risk management process in place at St. Thomas' School, the following decisions and steps were inform in its development:

- The Principal should form a team from across the school and develop a schedule of meetings.
 - At St. Thomas' School, the Principal will institute a Standing Committee to meet every 2-4 weeks on Risk Management.
- The team then begins the process by developing a shared understanding of risk management, the processes for developing and maintaining a risk register and familiarization of the school's Child Safety policy. Consideration should be given to

- strategies to inform all staff and school community on the importance of a risk management culture.
- A timeline is developed to establish the school's risk register
 - The process to identify, analyse, evaluate and treat potential risks is undertaken (Refer to the section *Developing and Monitoring the Risk Register* (page 6) and Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) [Child safety risk management strategies](#)).
 - The Risk Register Template (Appendix 2) will assist in recording the outcomes throughout the process.
 - Risks need to be assessed as to whether they are acceptable or unacceptable. In accordance with statutory requirements and diocesan policy there should be a low appetite for risks that concern child safety.
 - Risks with medium/high/extreme risk ratings are prioritized. Appropriate risk treatments to minimise/remove the potential risk are identified.
 - Priorities for actions and controls can be determined through a process of consultation with the school community and/or staff, and will include consideration of all information available. Refer to the *Risk Priority Table* (page 9) for examples of actions and timeframe.
 - Risks with a low risk rating, when taking into consideration controls already in place, no immediate further treatments may be required. They should however, be monitored.
 - Controls can include, but not limited to: replace with a lesser risk; redesign activity; review policy and procedures, undertake professional learning; provide additional supervision or resources and; abandon or suspend activity.
 - Controls are then implemented as soon as possible, taking into account their established priority. Consultation and communication to relevant stakeholders is important.
 - Some controls may be temporary measures while more long-term measures are pursued.
 - The risk management process and risk register should be reviewed regularly to check appropriate controls are still effective and to identify further risks that may have arisen.
 - A separate risk treatment plan may be necessary (Appendix 1) for risks that involve a medium-high number of controls or an event, such as a fete, that involves a number of school community groups and/or external contractors.
 - A final audit of the school processes against the requirements of Standard 6 is completed using [Child safety risk management strategies](#) (VRQA).
 - The school's leadership team, staff and governing authority endorse the risk register.

Effective Risk Management and the development of a Risk Register for St. Thomas' School involves the following key steps"

- Establish school context

School environment- includes every school related activity and extends beyond the school grounds and outside school hours. This includes any physical or virtual place made available or authorized by the school governing authority for use by a child or outside of school hours, including a campus of a school, online school environments, and other locations provided by the school for a child's use such as school camps and excursions.

- Identification of potential risks
- Analysis of the these risks
- Evaluation of possible responses to the risks
- Treatment to eliminate or reduce risks

The assessed risk level determines the degree of the treatments to minimize the potential risks including the regularity of the monitoring and review. In applying risk treatments, the following should be considered:

- replace with a lesser risk
- redesign the activity or process
- review policy or procedures to address or mitigate the risk
- professional learning
- additional supervision or resources
- abandon/suspend activity if unacceptable
- Monitor and Review
- Consult and Communicate (ongoing)

Risk Level Matrix

The risk level matrix is used in the analysis of each risk to determine the level of risks according to extreme, high, medium or low level when taking into consideration likelihood and consequence (impact).

RISK LEVEL MATRIX						
Consequence						
Likelihood		Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
	Almost Certain	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
	Likely	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme
	Possible	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme
	Unlikely	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
	Rare	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium

Considerations in assessing the likelihood and impact (consequence) include:

- competence, experience and qualifications of staff leading an activity or project
- levels of supervision required
- modes of transport
- environmental factors
- professional learning required
- communication of policies
- 'hot spots' and 'hot times'

- **Likelihood** means the chance of the situation or event occurring.
- **Consequence** means the extent of the harm should it actually occur

Priorities for action can be determined through a process of consultation with the school community and/or staff, and will include consideration of all information available. The Risk Priority Table provides examples of actions and timeframe. For risks with a low risk rating, taking into consideration controls already in place, no immediate further treatments may be required. They should however be monitored.

Risk Matrix Score	Example of Actions and Timeframe Required
Extreme	Take immediate action to address the issue

High	Re-organise, change location or defer activity as soon as possible, whilst introducing more immediate temporary measures. Develop short-term remedies and longer term solutions (Suggested time period of a week).
Medium	Consult with staff, volunteers and/or students to identify solutions and a timeline for change. Consider short-term actions that will reduce the risk whilst longer-term solution developed (Suggested time period of 2 weeks).
Low	Consult with staff, volunteers and/or students to identify short-term and longer-term solutions. Consider changes in practice or incorporate changes in school's improvement plan (suggested time period of 28 days).

Reference:

[*The Child Safe Standards: Standard 6*](#)

[*Ministerial Order 870 \(12.5\) \(2015\)*](#)