St Patrick's Catholic College

Safeguarding Plan

Our Safeguarding Commitment

St Patrick's College has zero tolerance for all forms of abuse and is committed to safeguarding everyone involved in its activities, ministries and services. The safety and wellbeing of children and adults-at-risk is paramount.

Accessibility

St Patrick's College is committed to providing accessible services to people from all culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. If you have difficulty understanding this document, you can contact Translating and Interpreting Service National on 13 14 50 to arrange for an interpreter to translate it for you.

Contact for enquiries

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Acknowledgement of Country

St Patrick's College acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our schools and offices stand. We honour the enduring relationship with Country, the lands, waters and skies that have been cared for through wisdom, responsibility and love for tens of thousands of years by First Nations peoples. We extend our deep respect to Elders past and present, and to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who continue to nurture culture, community and identity across generations.

We give thanks for the rich cultures, Spiritualities and knowledges that First Nations peoples share with us. These ways of knowing, being and doing continue to shape our understanding of community, justice and care for one another and for creation.

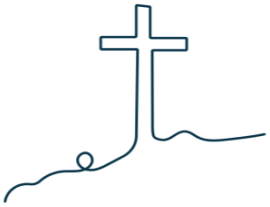
As a Catholic education community, we commit to embedding cultural safety in our school so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and staff are seen, respected and affirmed, and so that no one experiences harm, exclusion or silence because of culture or identity.

Cultural safety calls us to listen deeply, to reflect honestly on our histories, and to walk together in humility and courage. It asks us to ensure our classrooms, relationships, policies and practices uphold dignity, belonging and justice for all.

May we continue to walk gently and respectfully together, learning from First Nations peoples and from one another, so that our school is a place of welcome, truth-telling and hope.

May we be one in land, one in Spirit, one in Faith, united in God's love, committed to justice, and faithful to the responsibility entrusted to us as educators of this land.

Introduction



St Patrick's Catholic College, Gympie is committed to creating environments where children and young people feel protected, valued, and heard. Safeguarding is a shared responsibility, and every child has the right to grow and thrive free from harm.

We are guided by our Christian Catholic Tradition and the teachings of Jesus Christ who advocated for the protection of children and the marginalised. Our mission to teach, challenge and transform through our educational endeavours is actioned by Catholic Social Teaching, as part of the Archdiocese of Brisbane.

The Queensland Government recently introduced new Child Safe Standards. These Standards outline what child safe organisations must do to create environments where children are protected, respected and able to speak up.

As a Catholic school within the Archdiocese of Brisbane, we honour the Archdiocesan Safeguarding Commitment and uphold the values of Catholic education in our safeguarding practices.

This School Safeguarding Plan is developed in consultation with students, families, and employees, and is contextualised to our local school environment. It reflects our commitment to continuous improvement, cultural safety, and child-centred practice, and is supported by both Brisbane Catholic Education policies and procedures and school-specific safeguarding actions.

For more information or to request accessible formats, please contact the College Principal.

The Child Safe Standards

1. Leadership and Culture
2. Voice of children
3. Family and community
4. Equity and diversity
5. People
6. Complaints management
7. Knowledge and skills
8. Physical and online environments
9. Continuous improvement
10. Policies and procedures

The Universal Principle

Ensuring cultural safety through the Universal Principle is essential for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families. While the Principle intentionally focuses on First Nations children, the cultural safety indicators are used to adopt a proactive and comprehensive approach to safeguarding, ensuring that policies and practices are inclusive for all children, particularly those who may be marginalised or vulnerable.

Cultural Safety Indicators

1. Transformational unlearning
2. Negotiating values, motivations, and paradigms
3. Prioritising social and emotional wellbeing and health
4. Sharing power and decision-making
5. Sharing resources
6. Creating a strategic enabling environment
7. Operating on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander terms of reference
8. Accountability and continuous quality improvement

Standard 1: Leadership and Culture

At St Patrick's, we are committed to prioritising every student's safety and wellbeing. This includes ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and Community feel welcome, safe, valued, included and respected.

At St Patrick's, we begin our weekly College Leadership Team meetings with a 'safety share' which allows participants to share a strategy they have improved to maximise the safety and wellbeing of staff and students.

The Archdiocese of Brisbane Safeguarding Commitment is displayed in our school foyer, gathering space and in the Principal's office. This serves as a regular reminder that at St Patrick's, the safety and wellbeing of our students are paramount.

The *St Pat's Way* was developed in partnership with a parent representative group as a clear code of conduct for parents and carers. It sets out the shared expectations, behaviours and conditions that support a respectful and successful relationship between home and school, recognising that strong communication, mutual trust and a shared commitment to student wellbeing are essential to effective partnership.

At St Patrick's, we publicly display visual representations such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, artwork and Acknowledgement of Country signage that demonstrate our commitment to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of First Nations students and their families. NAIDOC Week features on the College Calendar, with a NAIDOC Mass the highlight of this week.

Our College Board takes an active interest in the development and refinement of the Reconciliation Action Plan, with an update on its implementation provided as part of the Principal's Report at each meeting.

The College has established an identified student leadership position designed to raise the profile, visibility and awareness of First Nations students across the College community. The student holding this role will help ensure that a First Nations perspective is represented in student leadership discussions, College events and relevant decision-making, while providing a strong and authentic voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Standard 2: Voice of children

At St Patrick's, our curriculum planning embeds students' rights to safety, information and participation through age-appropriate teaching on consent, respectful relationships and protective behaviours delivered through Australian Curriculum units and planned cohort learning.

Student voice is gathered each term, and student feedback is considered when planning units of work. It also informs feedback to teachers and serves as a triangulation tool for teachers reflecting on their practice.

Students engage in interactive classroom-based lessons that support understanding of personal safety, respect for self and others, and help-seeking, with opportunities to ask questions and participate in discussion.

We aim to create a space at school where students see sharing their voice as acceptable and the norm. When students raise safety concerns, we respond in a timely way and ensure they know the outcome.

At St Patrick's, we involve students in personalised learning plans and behaviour support processes where appropriate. At a whole-school level, student input is considered in behaviour management frameworks, pastoral care programs and wellbeing priorities.

Our educators attend professional learning each term with a key focus on multi-tiered systems of support, so that all students can be supported to achieve their best. Our multidisciplinary team also meets in dedicated Student Support Meetings to respond to student needs as they arise.

Standard 3: Family and community

At St Patrick's, families are actively invited to participate in planning and decision-making processes that affect their child. This includes involvement in personalised learning plans, behaviour support planning, re-entry meetings following absence, and safety or wellbeing planning where required.

When working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, we recognise that decisions may involve extended family members or trusted community representatives. Staff ask families who they would like involved and make space for those voices.

St Patrick's includes First Nations families and community representatives on our Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group and other consultative groups across the school.

At St Patrick's, safeguarding-related operational decisions are shared clearly with families through accessible methods including social media, flyers, newsletters and community meetings.

Families are encouraged to share feedback and raise concerns through parent–teacher conversations, direct contact with pastoral leaders and College surveys. The *St Pat's Way* sets out shared expectations for a respectful partnership between home and school, and family feedback is used to refine how we communicate and work together to keep students safe.

Our school maintains partnerships with local organisations and community services, such as St Vincent de Paul, to support children and families, strengthening shared responsibility for safety and wellbeing.

Standard 4: Equity and diversity

At St Patrick's, staff are committed to considering each student's unique circumstances before addressing issues related to behaviour, learning, or wellbeing. Routines, expectations, and supports are adjusted when needed and modifications are documented in individual support plans and reviewed with the student, family and relevant supports.

St Patrick's recognises that some students experience additional barriers to feeling safe, included and heard. We respond in ways that are culturally safe, inclusive and trauma-informed, tailored to the student and their individual context.

At St Patrick's we understand and value different knowledge systems and perspectives about student safety, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing. Feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, families and community members is actively sought and used to inform continuous improvement.

Our Inclusive Practices team works alongside classroom teachers to make reasonable adjustments for students with disability, and students from diverse cultural, linguistic and family backgrounds are supported to participate fully in College life. Attendance, wellbeing and engagement data is reviewed regularly to identify students who may need additional support, so that no student is overlooked.

At St Patrick's, students are regularly reminded who they can talk to if they feel worried or unsafe through classroom discussions, assemblies, visual resources and informal conversations. All students have access to one of the College's Guidance Counsellors through a self-referral button on the College intranet.

Standard 5: People

At St Patrick's, we recognise that the adults who work, volunteer and provide services in our community play a central role in keeping students safe. Every employee, volunteer and third party is recruited, screened and supported in line with Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) procedures.

All positions are advertised and filled through BCE recruitment and human resources processes, with our commitment to child safety stated clearly in position descriptions. Interview panels explore each applicant's understanding of child safety and professional boundaries, and referee checks are completed before an offer is made. No one begins working with students until they hold a current Working with Children Check (blue card) or, for teachers, Queensland College of Teachers registration.

New staff complete a College induction covering the BCE Code of Conduct, student protection processes and the Archdiocese of Brisbane Safeguarding Commitment. Volunteers and third parties sign in at Student Services, provide evidence of screening, wear visible identification and receive a safeguarding briefing on our expectations and how to raise a concern.

At St Patrick's, active supervision is an expectation of every staff member. Staff are rostered before school, during breaks and after school, and every excursion, camp and sporting activity is supported by a risk assessment and appropriate supervision ratios. Staff are reminded each year of the professional boundaries set out in the BCE Code of Conduct, including online communication with students, and any concern about an adult's conduct is managed promptly in consultation with BCE.

We maintain a register of Blue Card and teacher registration details for staff, volunteers and regular third parties. College administration monitors expiry dates and sends reminders well ahead of renewal, and anyone without current screening cannot work with students until it is renewed.

Evidence of this practice includes recruitment and referee records, induction checklists, the screening register, sign-in records, supervision rosters and risk assessments.

Standard 6: Complaints management

At St Patrick's, students and families are encouraged to raise concerns or complaints early. Students are regularly reminded who they can speak to, including home room teachers, classroom teachers, pastoral leaders, Guidance Counsellors, Student Protection Contacts and College Leadership.

Once each term, time is allocated at a staff meeting to remind all staff of the relevant complaints management processes. Practical case studies are shared and discussed so that staff can identify the appropriate steps to take when receiving, documenting, escalating and responding to a complaint, helping to build confidence and consistency in the College's approach.

Where a complaint or concern involves a student, staff respond in a child-focused, trauma-informed and culturally safe way, limiting repeated retelling and questioning and involving trusted adults where appropriate.

When concerns are raised, our leadership team and Student Protection Contacts use BCE complaints, student protection and behaviour procedures to guide how matters are received, escalated, documented and responded to.

Those who raise a concern are kept informed throughout the process and, wherever appropriate, are told the outcome and any actions taken. Complaints are recorded and reviewed by the College Leadership Team to identify patterns and opportunities for improvement, and information on how to raise a concern is shared with families.

Standard 7: Knowledge and skills

At St Patrick's, we recognise that keeping students safe depends on every adult having the knowledge, skills and confidence to recognise, respond to and report concerns. Safeguarding learning is an ongoing part of how we work, not a once-a-year event.

All employees complete BCE's mandatory Student Protection training on commencement and annually, along with the BCE Code of Conduct and related compliance modules. New staff complete this training during induction, before working with students. Volunteers and third parties receive a safeguarding briefing suited to their role, including how to raise a concern with a Student Protection Contact.

Safeguarding practice is reinforced throughout the year through our weekly College Leadership Team 'safety share', staff meeting updates and practical case studies. Student Protection Contacts are introduced to staff and students at the start of each year, and reminders about reporting, supervision and professional boundaries are given before camps, retreats and excursions.

At St Patrick's, cultural capability is embedded in our professional learning. Drawing on the Universal Principle, the Cultural Safety Indicators, our Reconciliation Action Plan and our connections with local Elders and community members, staff are supported to reflect on their own perspectives and respond in culturally safe ways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families.

College administration monitors completion of mandatory training through BCE records and reports progress to the College Leadership Team. Staff are given dedicated time and reminders ahead of due dates, and leaders follow up personally where training remains incomplete.

Evidence of this practice includes training completion records, induction checklists, briefing records, staff meeting agendas and professional learning schedules. In 2027, we will strengthen cultural capability learning in partnership with local First Nations community members and survey staff on their confidence in responding to safeguarding concerns.

Standard 8: Physical and online environments

At St Patrick's, we recognise that safe physical and online environments are essential to student safety and wellbeing. We work to identify and reduce risks across our campus, activities and digital spaces, while respecting each student's right to privacy, access to information, social connection and learning.

Our physical spaces are designed and supervised with student safety in mind. Areas with low visibility or limited passive supervision are identified and managed through supervision rosters, signage, lighting and the way spaces are set up and used. Staff are rostered before school, during breaks and after school, and active supervision is an expectation of every staff member. Visitors, volunteers and contractors sign in at Student Services and wear visible identification while on site, and access to student areas such as toilets and change rooms is managed to protect student privacy and safety. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, artwork and Acknowledgement of Country signage are displayed across the College, helping our spaces feel welcoming and culturally safe for First Nations students and families.

At St Patrick's, online safety is taught explicitly through our pastoral and curriculum programs. Students learn about respectful online behaviour, protecting their personal information, image sharing, cyberbullying and how to seek help when something goes wrong online. Students and families agree to the College's ICT acceptable use expectations, and the College network is filtered and monitored through BCE systems. Students are reminded that they can report online concerns to any trusted staff member, and families are directed to resources such as those from the eSafety Commissioner through newsletters and College communications.

Our employees model safe digital behaviours in line with the BCE Code of Conduct. Staff communicate with students only through approved College platforms and accounts, do not connect with students on personal social media, and follow College expectations when taking, storing and sharing images of students, including checking

publication consent before images are used. Reminders about professional boundaries online are included in induction, annual Code of Conduct training and staff meetings, and any concern about an adult's online conduct is managed promptly in consultation with BCE.

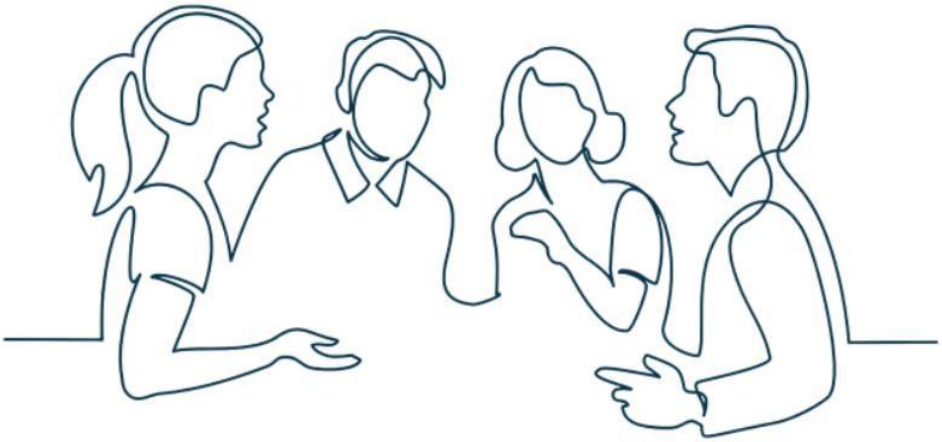
Both physical and online environmental risks are assessed and managed through BCE processes. Grounds and buildings are inspected regularly as part of workplace health and safety requirements, and every excursion, camp, retreat and sporting activity is supported by a risk assessment covering supervision ratios, overnight arrangements, transport and communication plans. When College facilities are hired by external groups or services are contracted from third parties, child safety requirements form part of the agreement, and contractors on site during school hours do not have unsupervised contact with students. Online risks are managed through BCE filtering and monitoring, and new digital platforms and apps are considered for privacy and safety before being used with students. Online incidents are responded to using BCE student protection and behaviour procedures.

Evidence of this practice includes workplace health and safety inspection records, supervision rosters, activity risk assessments, ICT acceptable use agreements, visitor and contractor sign-in records, facilities hire agreements, and online safety units within our pastoral program. In 2027, we will invite student leaders to take part in a campus safety walk to identify spaces where students feel less safe, review the online safety content in our pastoral program with student input, and provide staff with a refresher on safe digital practice, including the use of student images and approved communication platforms.

Standard 9: Continuous improvement

At St Patrick's, we see safeguarding as work that is never finished. We regularly review how well our child safety practices are working, listen to students, families and staff, and make changes when we find gaps.

Each semester, the College Leadership Team leads a 'policy in practice' walkthrough. Staff and students give feedback on how well our child safety procedures are working day to day, from visitor sign-in at Student Services, to supervision in high-traffic areas such as stairwells, walkways and the bus zone during transitions, to the ways students can give feedback in the classroom. This helps us identify areas needing improvement and act on them quickly and transparently.



Cultural safety is a deliberate focus of each walkthrough. St Patrick's invites feedback and participation from First Nations students and staff, including our First Nations student leader, so that cultural safety remains a priority and our practices reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. This feedback is shared with our Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group to inform its priorities.

Once each term, we hold a yarning circle with First Nations students and their families to understand what helps them feel safe in our College community and what we can do better to make our spaces culturally safe. Where possible, local Elders and community members are invited to take part.

Student wellbeing data and Guidance Counsellor self-referrals suggest these messages are being heard, with students more readily seeking help on the topics covered.

When a complaint or concern shows a gap in our processes, we complete a brief 'learning and improvement' form recording what happened, the underlying contributing factors and the changes we will make. These matters are discussed at College

Leadership Team meetings, alongside our weekly ‘safety share’, with a focus on what we have learned and what we will do differently.

St Patrick’s uses a combination of student, family and staff surveys, focus groups and wellbeing check-ins to understand whether our child safety initiatives are working. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, we work alongside local Elders and community members so that the way we evaluate reflects culturally informed measures of safety, belonging and relational trust.

Evidence of this practice includes walkthrough feedback records, yarning circle notes, assembly records, learning and improvement forms, College Leadership Team minutes, and survey and wellbeing data. In 2027, we will share a short summary of walkthrough findings and resulting changes with students and families each semester, and review this Safeguarding Plan annually with input from students, families and staff.

Standard 10: Policies and procedures

At St Patrick's, we use Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) policies and procedures, which are regularly reviewed and updated so that they address the requirements of the Child Safe Standards and the Universal Principle and include clear procedures for safeguarding children. These are supported by College-specific documents, including this Safeguarding Plan and the *St Pat's Way*, so that BCE requirements are applied in ways that reflect our local context.

We want every family in our community to be able to access and understand our safeguarding policies. Key policies and procedures are available on the College website and at Student Services, and families who would like information in another language or an accessible format are supported through the Translating and Interpreting Service (13 14 50) or by contacting the College directly. Where families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds join our community, we work with them to make sure safeguarding information is shared in a way that is clear and meaningful to them.

At St Patrick's, safeguarding messages and policies are shared with students in age-appropriate, student-friendly ways through our pastoral program, home room sessions and assemblies. Students learn about their rights to be safe, the expectations adults must follow, and how to raise a concern, while staff are supported to model and lead open, age-appropriate conversations about safeguarding and wellbeing. Student leaders, including our First Nations student leader, are invited to help shape how these messages are communicated to their peers.

Key safeguarding processes are explained to parents and carers at Year 7 orientation and parent information evenings, and through regular communication in the College newsletter and on social media. Staff are reminded of relevant policies and procedures during induction, at staff meetings and through annual BCE compliance training, so that policy is understood and applied consistently in day-to-day practice.

Evidence of this practice includes BCE policy and procedure documents, the College website, pastoral program materials, parent information evening presentations, newsletter items and staff training records.