



Diversity and Equity Policy

St Mary's School, Ararat operates with the consent of the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat and is operated and governed by Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL).

Policy Statement

St Mary's School (the School) will ensure that the principle of equity is upheld, and diverse student needs are respected in policy and practice. The School pays particular attention to the needs of:

- students with disability
- students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- students who are unable to live at home
- international students
- lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQA+) students
- Aboriginal students and provides and promotes a culturally safe environment for them.

The following inclusive practices will be implemented:

- use of inclusive curriculum materials and examples which are universally designed
- recognition of cultural awareness events (e.g. NAIDOC (National Aboriginal and Islanders Day Observance Committee) Week, Harmony Day)
- professional development for staff and volunteers on inclusive language and anti-discrimination
- buddy and mentoring programs to reduce social isolation

With regard to anti-discrimination and complaint handling, the following will apply:

- clear procedures for reporting discrimination, bullying or exclusion
- child-friendly, culturally safe complaint processes
- zero tolerance for racism, cultural abuse, ablism, homophobia, transphobia and other forms of bias (direct or indirect)

Monitoring and Review of these practices will be achieved by:

- an annual review of school Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policies and practices
- collection of feedback from students, families and staff, and actions to follow up on this feedback
- use of data to track achievement of inclusion outcomes and to identify areas for improvement

The following principles inform and underpin this policy:

- Human Dignity: Every person is made in the image of God and deserves respect
- Equity: Fair access to opportunities, recourse, and support for all
- Inclusion: Active participation of all individuals, regardless of background or identity
- Cultural Safety: Environments where diverse identities are respected, understood and celebrated

Context

The School commits to fostering a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environment where every student, staff member, and family is valued and supported. Grounded in Catholic social teaching, the School affirms the dignity of every person and actively promotes equity and inclusion across all aspects of school life in alignment with the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 1359.

Scope

This policy applies to all school staff (including employees, contractors, volunteers, clergy, labour hire workers), visitors, parents/guardians/carers, students and other members of the School community in all school environments (physical, virtual, offsite).

Legislative Context

- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities
- Australian Department of Education's Inclusion Strategy 2024–25

Definitions specific to this policy

TERM	DEFINITION
Cultural safety	relates to creating an environment that is safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This means there is no assault to, challenge to or denial of their identity and experience. Cultural safety concerns • strategic and institutional reform to remove barriers to the optimal health, wellbeing, and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This includes addressing unconscious bias, racism, and discrimination, and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination • shared respect, shared meaning, and shared knowledge • the experience of learning and listening together with dignity • individuals, organisations, and systems ensuring their cultural values do not negatively impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including addressing the potential for unconscious bias, racism, and discrimination • individuals, organisations, and systems ensuring self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This includes sharing power (decision-making and governance) and resources with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It is especially relevant for the design, delivery, and evaluation of services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Cultural safety is the positive recognition and celebration of cultures. It is more than just the absence of racism or discrimination and more than 'cultural awareness' and 'cultural sensitivity'. It empowers people and allows them to contribute and feel safe to be themselves. (CCYP, 2022, p.172)

Culturally and linguistically diverse	a broad and inclusive term for communities with diverse language, ethnic background, nationality, dress, traditions, food, societal structures, art and religion characteristics. The definition does not usually include Aboriginal communities and people because of their distinct history and experience as Australia's First Nations people. For the purpose of the Child Safe Standards there are specific considerations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. However, the cultural and linguistic diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is also acknowledged.
Direct discrimination	less favourable treatment because of a person's protected attribute.
Diversity	a range of personal characteristics, circumstances, life experiences and backgrounds. The combination of these differences makes up a child's unique identity and shapes the way they experience the world and the types of needs they have.
Equity	making adjustments so that children and young people have equal opportunity for the skills, knowledge, and resources they need to be safe regardless of their characteristics, circumstances, life experiences and backgrounds.
Indirect discrimination	imposing an unreasonable requirement, condition or practice that disadvantages a person or group of people with a protected attribute
Racism	includes prejudice, discrimination or hatred directed at someone because of their colour, ethnicity, or national origin. Racism can be revealed through people's actions as well as their attitudes. It can also be reflected in systems and institutions. Racism is more than just words, beliefs, and actions. It includes all the barriers that prevent people from enjoying dignity and equality because of their race.

Supporting Policies

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safe Governance Policy
- Child Safe Risk Management Policy
- Diversity and Equity Policy
- Engaging Families and Caregivers in Child Safety Policy
- PROTECT: Reporting and Responding Obligations Policy
- PROTECT: Reporting and Responding Obligations Procedures
- PROTECT: Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy
- PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending
- Student Empowerment and Participation Policy
- Bullying Prevention (including Cyber-bullying) Policy
- Grievance Policy

DOBCEL Principles of Governance

All DOBCEL policies are founded on and reflect the Principles of Governance stated in the Document: [DOBCEL Principles of Governance](#)

Approving authority	DOBCEL Board
Approval Date	December 2025
Review Date	December 2027