



## **Strategies to Promote the Participation and Empowerment of Children**

**St Colman's Primary School understands that children have the right to give their views and opinions about decisions that affect them, and to be listened to.**

Empowerment is about helping children to have their say. Acting to empower children will always guide the work of our school. St Colman's Primary School recognises that participation is important for children, as it provides them an opportunity to have a say about issues and decisions that affect them. Our school is acutely aware that children are more likely to speak up about their concerns about feeling unsafe, or make a complaint, if they feel their views are valued and welcomed.

St Colman's School understands that empowerment and participation is not a one-off event – it is an approach that is an integral part of our school's culture.

Empowering children and facilitating their participation enhances their safety. In Victoria, mandatory child safe standards have been introduced to help protect children from abuse in organisations.

Standard seven requires organisations such as St Colman's School to take steps to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

### **Benefits of empowering and supporting the participation of children:**

St Colman's School understands that participation and empowerment are vital components of a child safe organisation that benefits children, families, organisations and staff. Key benefits include:

- - Involving and consulting with children enables our school to improve its policies, practices and services, as children provide a unique voice regarding what makes them feel safe and unsafe.
- - Facilitating the empowerment and participation of children enhances a culture of child safety and listening to children within our school.
- - Children and young people learn new skills, build self-esteem, and develop an understanding of collaboration and rights.
- - Children are more likely to report abuse or concerns if they feel safe and empowered in the organisation.
- - Children feel their views are valued and listened to. Children are more likely to support the outcome if they have been involved. St Colman's School understands the need to be genuine in our approach to children, and follow through on what we say we will do – we acknowledge that credibility needs to be earned, and can be easily lost.

### **How St Colman's School encourages the empowerment and participation of children:**

As with all activities, St Colman's School understands that it is vital to plan the involvement of children, and will:

- Ensure participation is designed to be:

1. a) ethical
2. b) age appropriate and child-friendly
3. c) culturally respectful
4. d) inclusive of a diverse range of children, demonstrating respect for children of all ages, abilities, social and cultural backgrounds
5. e) positive and fun
6. f) voluntary and with informed consent.

- - Be clear, honest and realistic about the boundaries of a discussion and what can change.
- - Give adequate time to consult and make sure the venue is appropriate.
- - Listen to what we are being told by children – acknowledge, value and take seriously the views put forward by children.
- - Ensure adults involved are skilful in facilitating the participation of children.
- - Be clear if the discussion will be confidential or if the outcomes will be made public.
- - Monitor the impact our consultation may have had on the children involved.
- - Ensure we have procedures in place to provide support to any child who may be distressed as a result of their involvement or disclosure of concerns.
- - Provide feedback to children about how their views had informed decision-making.
- - Deliver appropriate education about: standards of behaviours for students attending school; healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality); resilience; and child abuse awareness and prevention.
- - Promote the Child Safe Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly for children.

**Related policies and documents:**

CECV Child Safe Standards