

PATRICIAN COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCE

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY MANUAL

Message from the Director & Secretary

The safety and well-being of every student at Patrician College is our foremost responsibility. While we take great pride in fostering academic excellence, research innovation, and holistic development, our deepest commitment remains to provide a learning environment that is safe, inclusive, and free from all forms of harm or neglect.

This *Child Protection Manual* reflects the core Patrician values of respect, integrity, and responsibility. It has been framed in alignment with the guidelines of the University of Madras, national legislations such as the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the Juvenile Justice Act, as well as international standards including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We recognize that safeguarding children is not merely a legal obligation but also a moral duty. Therefore, this policy framework is designed to guide our actions, strengthen preventive measures, and ensure that any concerns are addressed with sensitivity, confidentiality, and accountability.

I call upon all faculty members, staff, students, parents, and campus visitors to uphold these principles with utmost seriousness. Each of us shares the responsibility of creating a culture of vigilance, empathy, and respect where children feel valued and secure.

Together, let us affirm that there can be no compromise in protecting the rights, dignity, and future of our students. By embracing this shared responsibility, we strengthen the Patrician legacy of compassion, justice, and unwavering commitment to the holistic growth of every learner entrusted to our care.

Bro. Ramesh Amalanathan
Director & Secretary

Message from the Principal

The Child Protection Policy at Patrician College is not a document of guidelines, it is a living commitment that must be reflected in the daily life of our institution. This Policy is a collective promise to safeguard, empower, and nurture every student, especially those under the age of eighteen, who require special care and vigilance during this formative stage of their growth.

The Child Protection Calendar is an important instrument in fulfilling this mission. By mapping awareness programs, training sessions, workshops, and counseling initiatives across the academic year, it ensures that child safeguarding is woven into the culture of our college, rather than being treated as a one-time exercise. Each event in this calendar is designed to strengthen a proactive, campus-wide approach to safety and well-being.

The success of this endeavor depends on shared responsibility. Faculty members are called to model ethical conduct and serve as first responders when a student's safety is at risk. Staff members and support personnel must remain vigilant, approachable, and responsive, ensuring that no child ever feels isolated or unheard. Students themselves play a crucial role by respecting one another, supporting their peers, and reporting concerns without hesitation. Parents and guardians are valued partners whose active involvement reinforces our collective effort.

The initiatives outlined in this calendar on awareness campaigns, digital safety orientations, peer mentoring sessions, legal literacy programs, and more are not just scheduled activities. They are safeguards, designed to build vigilance, empathy, and accountability across our community. They represent the translation of policy into practice, and vision into reality.

We pledge our commitment to the effective implementation of the Child Protection Policy. We urge every member of the Patrician family to actively engage with the programs listed in this calendar and to uphold the principle that the safety and dignity of our students are non-negotiable. Together, let us create an environment where every learner feels secure, respected, and inspired to achieve their fullest potential.

Dr. Arokiamary Geetha Rufus
Principal

Introduction

Patrician College of Arts and Science recognizes that a part of its student community comprises individuals who are legally minors, being below the age of eighteen. These young learners deserve not only academic opportunities but also an environment that assures their safety, dignity, and overall well-being. The *Child Protection Handbook* has been prepared to guide every member of the Patrician community including students, faculty, staff, parents, vendors, and visitors on the policies, principles, and procedures that safeguard minors within the college.

This handbook provides clarity on legal responsibilities, institutional commitments, preventive strategies, and response mechanisms. It serves as a practical reference to empower all stakeholders to act responsibly, consistently, and confidently in the best interest of children.

Legal Framework

The Child Protection Policy of Patrician College is firmly anchored in constitutional, national, and international frameworks that safeguard children's rights. Key legislations and guidelines include:

- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 mandating reporting of offences against minors and ensuring child-friendly justice.
- The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 outlining provisions for care, protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration of children.
- University Grants Commission (UGC) Guidelines on Safety of Students on and off Campuses (2015) directing higher education institutions to create safe spaces and preventive measures.
- Tamil Nadu State Child Policy emphasizing institutional responsibility for child protection.
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ratified by India affirming every child's right to survival, protection, development, and participation.
- National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)

Patrician College affirms compliance with these frameworks and upholds a culture of *zero tolerance* towards child abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

Institutional Policy Statement

Patrician College adopts a Zero-Tolerance Policy toward any form of abuse, harassment, exploitation, or neglect of children. Every student under eighteen has the right to an educational experience rooted in dignity, safety, and respect.

This policy is not only a legal obligation but also a moral and ethical commitment, aligned with the Patrician spirit of service and care. The college has established institutional mechanisms such as:

- A Child Protection Committee (CPC) chaired by the Principal, with representatives from faculty, staff, and student services.
- A Child Protection Officer (CPO) as the designated point of contact for reporting, monitoring, and coordinating responses.
- Regular training and orientation programs for faculty, staff, and students to build awareness and vigilance.
- Counseling and mentoring support systems to ensure the emotional well-being of students.

Objectives:

- To create and sustain a child-safe environment within the college campus.
- To ensure that every member of the Patrician community understands their responsibility in safeguarding minors.
- To establish clear mechanisms for reporting, responding to, and preventing child abuse or neglect.
- To promote awareness, empathy, and ethical conduct among staff and students.
- To foster collaboration with parents, guardians, and external agencies for child welfare.

Scope and Applicability

This Child Protection Policy applies comprehensively across all activities associated with Patrician College, including:

- Academic and classroom activities
- Cultural, co-curricular, and sports events
- College tours, excursions, and field visits
- Digital platforms, online learning spaces, and virtual engagements

The policy applies to all stakeholders: faculty, administrative staff, support workers and security personnel. It also extends to contractors, vendors, service providers, and visitors engaged with the college in any capacity.

Every individual, regardless of role or duration of association, is expected to adhere to the policy provisions and contribute to a safe learning environment.

Definitions

- Child/Minor: Any student below the age of eighteen.
- Abuse: Physical harm, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, exploitation (including online abuse).
- Child Protection Officer (CPO): The designated authority in charge of implementing the policy, receiving complaints, and coordinating institutional responses.
- Mandatory Reporting: Under Section 19 of the POCSO Act, the legal duty of any person aware of or suspecting offences against a child to report the matter to authorities immediately.

Guiding Principles

The Child Protection Policy is built on principles that place the welfare of children at the centre:

- Zero Tolerance: No instance of abuse, neglect, or exploitation will be condoned or overlooked.
- Best Interest of the Child: All decisions prioritize the child's safety, dignity, and well-being.
- Confidentiality: Sensitive cases will be handled discreetly, protecting both the child and their family.
- Child Participation: Students are encouraged to express concerns freely and be active partners in safeguarding.
- Accountability: Faculty, staff, and administrators are legally and ethically responsible for timely reporting and follow-up.

Rights of Children/Students

Students under eighteen at Patrician College are entitled to the following rights:

- Protection from abuse, neglect, exploitation, harassment, and bullying in all forms.
- Privacy, dignity, and respect in academic, residential, and extracurricular settings.
- Freedom from discrimination based on gender, caste, religion, ability, or background.
- Safe avenues to report abuse without fear of reprisal, with assurance that complaints will be addressed promptly and sensitively.
- Access to counseling, mentoring, and other support services as part of the college's commitment to holistic student well-being.

Implementation and Monitoring

To ensure effective enforcement of this policy, Patrician College will establish:

- Awareness Programs – Regular campaigns and workshops for students, parents, and staff on child safety, digital responsibility, and respectful conduct.
- Capacity-Building Workshops – Specialized training for faculty, and staff to identify risks and respond appropriately.
- Monitoring and Evaluation – Periodic review of policy implementation by the Child Protection Committee.
- Grievance Redressal Mechanism – A transparent system for reporting, investigating, and resolving child protection concerns.

By integrating these provisions into institutional life, Patrician College translates policy into practice, ensuring that safeguarding remains a lived commitment and not just a written document.

Patrician College of Arts and Science affirms its pledge to protect, nurture, and empower every learner, recognizing that a secure environment is the foundation for educational excellence and holistic growth.

Preventive Measures:

- Mandatory child protection induction for all newly recruited faculty and staff.
- Periodic verification of background and credentials of staff, volunteers, and contractors working with minors.
- Display of child helpline numbers (1098) and CPC contact details in all student-access areas.
- Integration of child safety awareness into student orientation and mentoring programs.

Observance of “Child Protection Week” every academic year to reinforce awareness

Child Protection Committee (CPC) will consist of the following members

1. Head of the Institution – Principal
2. Child Protection Nodal Officer - Senior Faculty from Social Work/Psychology
3. One Male and One Female Teaching Staff - Senior Staff
4. Parent Representative – PTA President & Vice President (nominated annually)
5. Student Representatives – Chairperson & Vice Chairperson, Student Council (nominated annually)
6. Non-Teaching Staff Representative – Senior Staff
7. External Member - A Well-known advocate

Roles and Responsibilities of the Child Protection Committee:

- Ensure implementation of the Child Protection Policy and review its effectiveness annually.
- Conduct awareness programs and training sessions for staff and students.
- Oversee the prompt and confidential handling of complaints.
- Maintain liaison with the police, Childline (1098), and the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) when legal escalation is required.
- Ensure post-incident care including counseling and academic support for affected students.

Role of the Child Protection Officer (CPO):

- Serve as the primary point of contact for all child protection concerns.
- Receive and document complaints confidentially.
- Convene the CPC meeting once in quarter and facilitate communication between parties.
- Ensure compliance with mandatory reporting obligations under Section 19 of the POCSO Act.
- Maintain all child protection records in a secure and confidential manner.

Reporting Mechanism:

- Any student, staff member, parent, or visitor may report concerns related to child abuse, harassment, neglect, or exploitation to the Child Protection Officer in person, by email, or through the designated online portal / complaint form.
- Anonymous complaints may be accepted if sufficient information is provided to initiate an inquiry.
- Emergency situations involving immediate danger must be reported to the Principal and local police without delay.
- A 24-hour contact number / dedicated email ID shall be displayed prominently across the campus and digital platforms for easy access.

Procedure Following Receipt of a Complaint

Convening a Meeting:

A meeting of the Child protection committee will be convened immediately upon receipt of a written complaint / online complaint to the Child Protection Officer (CPO). The CPO shall notify all members and fix a suitable date and time for the initial review meeting.

Preliminary Documentation:

The committee will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and prepare a detailed incident report within two working days, summarizing the nature of the complaint, parties involved, date and place of occurrence, and any supporting evidence or statements received.

Inquiry Process:

An inquiry will be conducted by the Child Protection Committee(CPC) in accordance with the institutional policy and relevant legal provisions. Both the complainant and the respondent will be given an opportunity to present their statements, submit evidence, and identify witnesses if any. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process.

Resolution Timeline:

The committee shall strive to complete the inquiry and arrive at a decision within seven working days from the date of the initial meeting. Recommendations may include counseling, warning, disciplinary action, or any other remedial measure deemed appropriate.

Recording of Proceedings:

Detailed minutes of the inquiry will be recorded, including discussions, findings, and resolutions. The minutes will be signed by all committee members present and securely maintained in the CPC records for future reference.

Communication of Outcome:

The final decision and recommended actions will be communicated in writing to both parties and, where required, forwarded to the Chairperson of CPC/ Head of the Institution for implementation.

Confidentiality and Follow-up:

All information relating to the complaint and inquiry will be treated as strictly confidential. Follow-up meetings may be conducted to ensure compliance with the committee's recommendations and to provide support to the affected parties.

Protection of Complainant and Whistleblower:

- Retaliation or victimization of any complainant, witness, or member of the committee is strictly prohibited.
- The identity of the complainant and the child shall not be disclosed to any unauthorized person.
- Disciplinary action shall be taken against any person attempting to intimidate or influence the inquiry process.

Record Keeping and Policy Review:

- All documentation related to complaints, inquiry proceedings, and resolutions shall be securely maintained by the CPO for a minimum of **five years**.
- The CPC shall review the effectiveness of the policy annually and recommend revisions to address emerging challenges.
- The reviewed policy shall be submitted to the Governing Body for approval and dissemination.

Child Protection Committee (CPC) for the year 2025 – 2026

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1	Dr.Arokiamary Geetha Rufus	<i>Chairperson</i>	9551717468	principa@patriciancollege.ac.in
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