



# St Michael's Primary School

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## CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

At St Michael's PS, we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of our school. Our commitment is drawn from, and inherent to, the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the gospel.

### 2.0 PURPOSE

The St Michael's PS, Heyfield, Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our school's commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This Policy provides an overview of our school's approach to implementing *Ministerial Order No. 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises (Ministerial Order No. 1359)*, which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

It informs our school community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

### 3.0 SCOPE

This Policy:

- applies to all school staff (including teachers, non-teachers, casual employees and pre-service teachers), volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to School Advisory Committee members where indicated;
- applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided for a student's use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers;
- should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related policies section below.

### 4.0 DEFINITIONS

The following terms in this Policy have [specific definitions](#) used in relation to the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order No. 1359:

- child
- child safety
- child abuse

- child-connected work
- child-related work
- school environment
- school staff
- school governing authority
- student
- volunteer.

## **5.0 STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY**

St Michael's PS, Heyfield, is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families.

We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views are respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults, including school staff, contractors, volunteers, parents, guardians and carers and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our school environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning and/or asexual (LGBTIQA+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our school has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, school staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

## **6.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **School Leadership Team**

Our school leadership team (comprising of the principal, senior teacher and Religious Education Leader) is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order No. 1359.

Principals will:

- ensure that effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed
- model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and school staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students
- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the school community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and School Advisory Committee meetings
- ensure risk management strategies are documented and in place that focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks related to child safety and wellbeing in the school
- facilitate and maintain records of regular professional learning for school staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and the prevention of, and responding to, abuse
- create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

### **School Staff, Contractors and Volunteers**

All school staff, contractors and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school or the Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited (**DOSCEL**), and always follow the school and DOSCEL's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- act in accordance with our [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#)
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) and the following DOSCEL policies and procedures:
  - Protection of Children – Reporting Obligations Procedure
  - Protection of Children – Anti-Grooming Policy
  - Protection of Children – Failure to Disclose Policy
  - Protection of Children – Failure to Protect Policy
  - Mandatory Reporting Policy
  - Guide to Reporting Conduct under the Reportable Conduct Scheme
  - Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes Policy and Procedure
- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

### **School Advisory Committee**

In performing the roles and responsibilities in accordance with the DOSCEL School Advisory Committee Charter, School Advisory Committee members will:

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at School Advisory Committee meetings [**Note** It is not necessary to discuss child safety at every meeting, but child safety should be prioritised as a discussion at some meetings throughout each school year to ensure that a culture of child safety is being embedded and School Advisory Committee members are informed and understand the issues]
- undertake annual training on child safety provided by the school
- provide feedback in relation to, and act in accordance with, the school Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to School Advisory Committee members
- when participating in the selection process of the school principal, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe.

### **Specific School Staff Child Safety Responsibilities**

St Michael's PS, Heyfield, has nominated a Child Safety Champion to support the principal to implement our child safety policies and practices, including school staff and volunteer training.

The responsibilities of the Child Safety Champion are outlined in the DOSCEL guidance for Child Safety Champions.

Our principal and Child Safety Champion are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

- The principal is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Anyone in our school community should approach the principal if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- The principal is responsible for informing the school community about this Policy, and making it publicly available.
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in other child safety policies and procedures, including but not limited to the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Protection of Children – Reporting Obligations Procedure, Mandatory Reporting Policy, and Child Safety Risk Register.

Our school has also established a Child Safety and Wellbeing Team and a Student Reference Group on child safety. The Child Safety and Wellbeing Team meet regularly to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing. The Student Representative Committee forms our Student Reference Group and provides an opportunity for students to provide input into school child safety strategies.

Our Child Safety and Wellbeing team monitors the Child Safety Risk Register.

## **7.0 CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT**

The St Michael's PS Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

## **8.0 MANAGING RISKS TO CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING**

At our school we identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site activities, such as school camps and excursions, and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our School Leadership Team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

## **9.0 ESTABLISHING A CULTURALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

At St Michael's PS, Heyfield, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school environment where the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's histories, cultures, values and practices are respected and celebrated.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, we recognise that the link between the student's culture, identity and their cultural safety are critical to ensuring that they feel comfortable being themselves and expressing their spiritual and cultural beliefs.

The school creates opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, families and local Aboriginal communities to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

We have developed the following strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community:

- Developing child safety policies and other policies that take into consideration the establishment of an inclusive and culturally safe environment.
- Building a strong school culture to support cultural inclusion through:
  - *Beginning events and assemblies with a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country.*
  - *Displaying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags at the front entrance to the school.*
  - *Acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the traditional custodians of the land on the school website.*
  - *Making Aboriginal voice part of decision making in matters that affect Aboriginal students.*
  - *Learning about the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Australia, beginning with the school's local Aboriginal community the Gunai Kurnai people.*
- Building knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history through:
  - *Embedding this knowledge in the curriculum programs and providing resources to support this.*

- *Acknowledging and exploring significant events in ATSI history at a whole school level eg Sorry Day, NAIDOC week.*
- Actively addressing racism through our policies and processes.
- Our Learning Adjustment Plan: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education outlines the measures we have in place to maintain an inclusive and culturally safe school for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and students

## **10.0 STUDENT VOICE AND EMPOWERMENT**

To support child safety and wellbeing at St Michael's PS Heyfield, we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Strategies are in place to ensure that all student voices are listened to, including students who find it harder to speak up or be heard. We support our students to feel comfortable about speaking up and recognise that students communicate in different ways, including through verbal and non-verbal cues, play, body language, facial expressions, drawings and/or behaviours.

All students at St Michael's PS Heyfield are empowered to express their views, contribute to school life and are encouraged to provide feedback on school wide decisions. We take into account student views when school decisions are made, including when developing and implementing policies and procedures.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the school to ensure a sense of belonging through:

- implementing our Whole School Approach to Positive Behaviour Support (**WSAPBS**)
- our student Code of Conduct
- our school values of respect
- our Student Representative Committee
- student mentoring (eg buddies and multi-age activities)

We inform students of their rights through our Student Code of Conduct, WSAPBS, You Can Do It program and child safety education and give them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers. We ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time. Students and families can also access information on how to report concerns via the school parent handbook, the school website or through the school office.

When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct or abuse of a child, we will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously, check our understanding of the complaint, support the student and keep them (and their parents, guardians, and carers, as appropriate) informed of progress.

## 11.0 FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Our families and the school community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, at St Michael's PS Heyfield we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

We do this by:

- Seeking input from families and the community through surveys, newsletters and email
- Seeking input from the School Advisory Committee on policy and procedures
- Seeking input from students through the Student Representative Committee
- Seeking input from school staff on policy and procedures.
- All of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents, guardians and carers on the school website ([www.stmheyfield.catholic.edu.au](http://www.stmheyfield.catholic.edu.au))
- Newsletters will inform families and the school community about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed in the school.

## 12.0 DIVERSITY AND EQUITY

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and young people with disability
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- international students
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

At St Michael's PS, Heyfield, we have policies and strategies that guide and support us in providing a respectful environment that is free from discrimination such as our Anti-bullying and Prevention Policy, WSAPBS, You Can Do It program and Learning Adjustment Strategy.

We also incorporate inclusivity in our language and actions, through whole school focuses and targeted activities and through embedding the capabilities in our curriculum programs.

## **13.0 SUITABLE SCHOOL STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

At St Michael's PS, Heyfield, we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all school staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

### **School staff recruitment**

When recruiting school staff, we follow the DOSCEL Recruitment and Engagement Policy and associated guidelines.

When engaging school staff to perform child-related work, we:

- ensure Child Safety is a key focus in the selection and employment process
- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance (previously called a Working with Children Check or WWCC) evidence or equivalent background check such as a Victorian Institute of Teaching (**VIT**) registration
- collect and record:
  - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
  - the person's history of working with children
  - references that address suitability for the position and working with children.

### **School staff induction**

All newly appointed school staff will be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program will include a focus on:

- the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document)
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- the Protection of Children – Reporting Obligations Procedure
- the Protection of Children – Anti-Grooming Policy
- the Protection of Children – Failure to Disclose Policy
- the Protection of Children – Failure to Protect Policy
- the Mandatory Reporting Policy
- the Guide to Reporting Conduct under the Reportable Conduct Scheme
- the Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes Policy and Procedure
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that DOSCEL and/or school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

### **Ongoing supervision and management of school staff**

All school staff engaged in child-connected work are supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. Where it is not practical or desirable for school staff such as teachers to be directly supervised in their classrooms, the school has strategies in place to provide support and supervision of these school staff.

School staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continued suitability for child-connected work. This will be done by the Principal through performance review.



Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed promptly and in accordance with our school and DOSCEL policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

### **Suitability of volunteers**

All volunteers are required to comply with the DOSCEL Volunteers Policy which describes how schools must assess the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing induction and training, and supervision and management.

## **14.0 CHILD SAFETY KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND AWARENESS**

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that school staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our school staff will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

School staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- our school's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices
- completing the [Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#) online module annually
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment.

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing, for example, training for our volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

### **School Advisory Committee training and education**

To ensure our School Advisory Committee is equipped with the knowledge required to support principals in making decisions in the best interests of student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment, the School Advisory Committee is trained at least annually. Training includes guidance on:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse
- child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment
- St Michael's PS, Heyfield, child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices.

## 15.0 COMPLAINTS AND REPORTING PROCESSES

St Michael's PS, Heyfield, fosters a culture that encourages school staff, volunteers, students, parents, guardians, carers, and the school community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in the DOSCEL Complaints and Grievances Management Policy and the school complaint-handling process. The [DOSCEL Complaints and Grievances Management Policy](#) and the school complaint-handling process can be found in our Parent Handbook.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all school staff and volunteers (including School Advisory Committee members) must follow DOSCEL policies to address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school. DOSCEL policies to be followed by school staff are the:

- Protection of Children – Reporting Obligations Procedure
- Protection of Children – Anti-Grooming Policy
- Protection of Children – Failure to Disclose Policy
- Protection of Children – Failure to Protect Policy
- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Guide to Reporting Conduct under the Reportable Conduct Scheme
- Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes Policy and Procedure.

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, we will ensure our school follows:

- the [Four Critical Actions](#) for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child
- the [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending.

The DOSCEL Anti-Bullying and Prevention Policy which is accessible on the school website covers complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

## 16.0 COMMUNICATIONS

St Michael's PS, Heyfield, is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on our website including the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document), Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the following DOSCEL policies:
  - Protection of Children – Reporting Obligations Procedure
  - Protection of Children – Anti-Grooming Policy
  - Protection of Children – Failure to Disclose Policy
  - Protection of Children – Failure to Protect Policy

- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Guide to Reporting Conduct under the Reportable Conduct Scheme
- Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes Policy and Procedure.
- displaying PROTECT posters around the school
- updates in our school newsletter
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and School Advisory Committee meetings.

## **17.0 PRIVACY AND INFORMATION SHARING**

St Michael's PS, Heyfield, collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws. For information on how our school collects, uses and discloses information refer to the DOSCEL Privacy Policy.

## **18.0 RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with DOSCEL record keeping procedures.

## **19.0 REVIEW OF CHILD SAFETY PRACTICES**

At St Michael's Primary School, we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

- review and improve our policy every two years or after any significant child safety incident
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community.

## **20.0 RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related school policies, procedures, and codes. These include:

- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Complaint-handling process

### **Related DOSCEL policies, procedures and resources**

- Protection of Children – Reporting Obligations Procedure
- Protection of Children – Anti-Grooming Policy
- Protection of Children – Failure to Disclose Policy
- Protection of Children – Failure to Protect Policy
- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Guide to Reporting Conduct under the Reportable Conduct Scheme
- Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes Policy and Procedure

- Digital Learning Policy (Internet, Social Media and Digital Devices)
- Visitors Policy
- Volunteers Policy
- Complaints and Grievances Management Policy
- Anti-Bullying and Prevention Policy
- Records Management Policy
- Child Safe Standards – Recordkeeping Policy
- Off-Site Supervision of Students Policy
- On-Site Supervision of Students Policy
- Recruitment Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Whole School Approach to Positive Behaviour Support

#### **Other related documents**

- [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- [Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools](#)
- [The Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct](#)
- Ministerial Order No. 1359, Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Facilities

## **21.0 AUTHORITY, MONITORING AND REPORTING**

DOSCEL, a Company incorporated under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth.), is the Governing Authority of primary and secondary schools in the Diocese of Sale, excluding Catholic College Sale and Lavalla Catholic College, Traralgon.

The Chief Executive Officer, DOSCEL, is responsible for the management and general administration of DOSCEL schools. Based on the principle of subsidiarity and in keeping with the DOSCEL Delegation Register for Schools, a broad range of duties, functions, powers and authority are delegated to the Principal. This includes the effective implementation of this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and the compliance obligations outlined in this policy.

However, the Chief Executive Officer, DOSCEL, remains responsible for monitoring the development and implementation of this policy and for providing reports as required to the Directors of the DOSCEL Board.

The Principal is responsible for:

- ensuring compliance with the obligations outlined in this policy;
- assigning authority, responsibility and accountability at appropriate levels within the school for policy implementation and compliance;

- providing delegated school staff with the direction, support and resources necessary to fulfil policy requirements;
- ensuring cyclic reviews of the policy;
- reporting and escalating concerns, issues and policy breaches to the Chief Executive Officer, DOSCEL, and working collaboratively with the Chief Executive Officer, DOSCEL, to resolve them.

Whilst the Principal will play an important role in effective implementation of this policy and compliance with the Standards, it is noted that responsibility for compliance with the Standards ultimately remains with DOSCEL.

## 22.0 POLICY STATUS AND REVIEW

The Principal is responsible for reviewing and updating the school Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at least every two years. The review will include input from students, parents, guardians, carers and the school community.

### Approval

This Policy is endorsed by the Chief Executive Officer, DOSCEL.

<b>Implementation Date:</b>	<b>12/10/2022</b>
<b>Consultation:</b>	Staff through staff meeting School community through newsletter communication and school website School Advisory Committee
<b>Review Date:</b>	<b>12/10/2023</b>