Child Safety Policy

OakTree College ('the College') is an independent co-educational specialist senior secondary school providing education opportunities for young people of migrant backgrounds who are at risk of disengaging from education.

OakTree College ('the College') seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment where all students can safely participate in the educational experiences offered by the College.

1. Purpose

The OakTree College ('the College') Child Safety Policy demonstrates our 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 approach to implementing Ministerial Order 1359 - Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in Schools and n boarding premises (Ministerial Order 1359) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

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

2. Scope

This policy:

- applies to all staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to College Board members.
- applies in all physical and online environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided by for a student's use and those provided through third-party providers such as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO).
- should be read together with other College child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to Related Policies, section 21.

3. Definitions

The following terms in this policy have specific definitions. Refer to Appendix 1 for the full list of definitions.

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

4. Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

The College is a child safe organisation which welcomes all young people and their families. We are committed to providing environments where students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views 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 zero tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our settings and environments. We promote positive relationships between students and staff 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 the College 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 students, those from migrant and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer and 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 the College, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in the College 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, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

a. College Board

In performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, College Board members will:

- Champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader College community;
- Ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at College Board meetings. Child safety will be discussed at every Board meeting to ensure that a culture of child safety is embedded and College Board members are informed and understand the issues;
- Undertake annual training on child safety. The College Board will refer to the Child Safe Standards School Council Training slide presentation available on PROTECT as appropriate;
- Approve updates to, and act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to College Board employees and members;
- When appointing College Board members, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe. At the College, part of the College Board statutory duties are delegated to the Executive Principal who is bound by this policy;
- Provide training and information on child safety to staff, College Board members and volunteers, as appropriate;
- Analyse complaints, concerns and safety incidents to identify causes and any systemic failures;

- Review, evaluate and endorse Child Safe policies, procedures and practices on an annual basis or after an incident;
- Report results of reviews to staff, volunteers, students, parents and the College community;
- Promote a culture of continuous improvement.

b. College leadership team

The College leadership team (comprising the Executive Principal and Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader) is responsible for ensuring that an appropriate child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

The Executive Principal and Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader will:

- Ensure 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 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 College community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and College Board meetings;
- Facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers or contractors (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and 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;
- Report instances of child abuse to the relevant authorities in accord with the College's reporting obligations including mandatory reporting, reportable conduct, failure to disclose and failure to protect;
- Adhere to the College policies including the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct;
- Create an appropriate Child Safe Risk Register (endorsed by the College Board);
- Recruit staff, provide appropriate induction and training as well as ensure that all College practices are child safe;
- Maintain and manage records retention and disposal;
- Induct and/or supervise visitors, volunteers and contractors to the College.

c. College staff, volunteers and contractors

All staff, volunteers and contractors will:

- Understand and comply with all policies and practices designed to protect students and to report harm including mandatory reporting;
- Participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the College, and always follow the College child safety and wellbeing policies;
- Identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, including following the Four Critical Actions for Schools at Appendix 2;

- 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;
- Contribute to the development and review of the Child Safety Code of Conduct and act in accordance with the Code of Conduct at all times.

d. External providers

An external RTO provider has been engaged by the College to provide a course of study as part of the senior secondary curriculum and must comply with Ministerial Order 1359 and the duty of obligation and reporting requirements. The delivery of courses may take place on College premises or offsite.

e. Specific staff child safety responsibilities

The College has nominated the Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader as the child safety champion to support the Executive Principal to implement the College child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training.

The responsibilities of the child safety champion are outlined at [Guidance for child safety champions](). In summary these are to:

- promote child safety and wellbeing,
- provide support and guidance,
- provide induction and training program including ensuring annual mandatory reporting training is completed,
- monitor, review and report any child safety concerns or incidents.

The Executive Principal and child safety champion (the Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader) are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

The child safety champion is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safe Policy. Anyone in the College community should approach the Assistant Principal if they have any concerns about the College's compliance with the Child Safe Policy.

The child safety champion is responsible for informing the College community about this policy and making it publicly available.

Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and Child Safety Risk Register.

The College via the Executive Principal will establish a Child Safety and Wellbeing Team and a Student Reference Group on child safety (as appropriate).

The Child Safety and Wellbeing Team will meet regularly to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing and will also monitor the Child Safety Risk Register with the leadership team. This will be made up of staff and chaired by the Executive Principal. They will meet at least once a month.

The Student Reference Group provides an opportunity for students to provide input into College strategies, raise any child safety related matters and be part of the solution. At least one student will be included in this reference group with other teaching staff and chaired by the Assistant Principal. They will meet at least once a term.

6. Child Safety Code of Conduct

Our 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 College.

The College expects all employees, volunteers and contractors to proactively ensure the safety and wellbeing of students at all times, to identify concerns about child safety and wellbeing and to take appropriate action if there are concerns about the safety and wellbeing of any student at the College. All staff must remain familiar with the relevant laws, the code of conduct, and policies and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements.

7. Managing Risks to Child Safety

The College will identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing on the College premises and online. 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 excursions and services the College contracts through third party providers for student use.

The College Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. The leadership team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually and have these endorsed by the College Board.

The College will:

- develop and implement risk management strategies that
  - focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks related to child safety and wellbeing in the College,
  - consider the College environment, the programs it delivers and the needs of students,
- record the risks and the actions the College will take to reduce or remove them (risk controls and risk treatments),
- each year monitor and review child safety and wellbeing risks and assess the effectiveness of risk controls.

8. Establishing a Culturally Safe Environment (Standard 1)

The College is committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe environment where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

For Aboriginal students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our planning, policies and activities.

The College will use the following strategies to promote aboriginal cultural safety:

- equip staff, students, volunteers and the College community to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and students;
- adopt measures to ensure racism is identified, confronted and not tolerated;
- address any instances of racism within the College environment with appropriate consequences;

- actively support participation and inclusion in the College by Aboriginal students and their families;
- ensure College policies, procedures, systems and processes create a culturally safe and inclusive environment and meet the needs of Aboriginal students and their families.

9. Child Safety and Wellbeing is Embedded in Leadership, Governance and Culture (Standard 2)

The College will protect its students from abuse and create an environment where students feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. We are committed to establishing a culture where child abuse and harm is not tolerated, and to implementing effective systems and processes to reduce and manage risks. We will ensure that students, families and staff know what to do if they observe, or are subjected to, abuse or inappropriate behaviour.

The Executive Principal is responsible for working with the College Board and staff to build and maintain a culture of transparency, inclusiveness and awareness.

The Assistant Principal's key responsibilities as the child safety champion include:

- Acting as a source of support, advice and expertise to the College Board, staff, students and parents;
- Liaising with the Executive Principal and other College leaders to ensure a collaborative, transparent and unified approach to child safety;
- Leading the development of the College's child safe culture including being a child safe champion and providing coordination in communicating, implementing, monitoring, enhancing and reporting on strategies to embed a culture of child safety.

The College Board has overall responsibility for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of students in the College. The College's policies, events, activities and management practices will consider the Child Safe standards.

The College Board will receive training on the Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct. 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 risks in the College learning environment,
- Child safety policies, procedures, codes and practices of the College.

The College Board is responsible for raising awareness across the College and must:

- Ensure the College child safety policies are known and used appropriately,
- Ensure College actions are reviewed as to the effectiveness of the strategies put into place and to revise accordingly,
- Ensure the College 's child safety policy is reviewed annually,
- Ensure regular briefing sessions are conducted for College staff members to ensure a high degree of awareness of the Child Safe Standards and the Child Safety Policy,
- Ensure the Child Safety Policy is available publicly,
- Encourage amongst staff a culture of listening to students and taking account of their wishes and feelings in any measures to protect them.

10. Student Empowerment (Standard 3)

To support child safety the College will 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.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the College to ensure a sense of belonging through implementing our Student Code of Conduct, our values and our student care and wellbeing policies.

Students are informed of their rights through the enrolment process, curriculum delivery, the Student & Parent/Guardian Handbook, College policies, newsletters and information on the College website, to 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 at College Reception and on the website.

When the College 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, carers or guardians, as appropriate) informed about progress.

The College seeks to empower students by:

- informing students about all their rights, including their rights to safety, information and participation;
- recognising the importance of friendships and encourage support from peers, to help students feel safe and be less isolated;
- developing a culture that encourages participation and responds to what students say;
- giving students opportunities to participate, and respond to their contributions to strengthen confidence and engagement;
- offering students access to sexual abuse prevention programs and related information in an age-appropriate way (as appropriate).

The Student Reference Group provides an opportunity for students to provide input into College strategies, raise any child safety related matters and be part of the solution.

11. Family Engagement (Standard 4)

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

To support family engagement, we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

The College 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.

The College will do this by:

- Making available our child safety policies and procedures for students and parents on our website and in our Student & Parent/Guardian Handbook;
- Providing new enrolments with enrolment packs that include information about child safety, the College complaints processes and how to raise concerns;

- Holding open days or hosting community events to welcome families and the broader community;
- Providing regular opportunities for parents, guardians or carers to engage with staff to discuss their child's experiences at College;
- Incorporating child safety questions in parent, carer, guardian surveys to measure awareness and confidence in the College's child safety approach and to support ongoing improvement;
- Displaying PROTECT Child Safety posters across the College;
- Ensuring students, College staff, and members of the College community know who to contact if they have a concern about child safety;
- Translating child safety information into multiple languages where necessary to reflect the College community or providing an interpreter for conversations related to child safety depending on the needs of the family;
- Reporting the outcomes of relevant reviews to staff, community and families and students to show transparency and accountability;
- Communicating with and appropriately involving families at all stages of the process if a concern or complaint is raised.

12. Diversity and Equity (Standard 5)

As a child safe organisation, the College celebrates the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promotes respectful environments that are free from discrimination. We recognise that every student has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

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

- Aboriginal young people
- young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- young people with disabilities
- young people unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- young people who identify as LGBTIQA+.

The College Diversity and Equity Procedure, Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment Policy, Duty of Care Policy and Child Safe Code of Conduct provide more information about the measures in place to support diversity and equity.

Other strategies and actions we employ to support diversity and equity include:

- Induction and training for staff and volunteers to ensure they understand the diverse circumstances of students and how to support and respond to vulnerable students,
- A complaints process that is culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.

13. Suitable Staff and Volunteers (Standard 6)

The College will apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors and volunteers are suitable to work with young people.

College recruitment processes are designed to ensure all reasonable steps are taken to engage highly skilled people. Selection criteria and advertisements clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative

responsibilities. We encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and from people with a disability.

a. Staff recruitment

When recruiting staff, the College considers the applicant's:

- motivation to work with children (professional or personal)
- relevant and verifiable child-related work experience
- understanding or professional boundaries
- communication skills.

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

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children Clearance card or Victorian Institute of Teaching 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 job and working with children.

Refer to the College Staff Recruitment and Personnel Procedure for further detail.

b. Staff induction

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

- the Child Safety Policy (this document)
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- the Duty of Care Policy
- the Complaints Policy
- the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that College leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

c. Ongoing supervision and management of staff

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards students is safe and appropriate.

Staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. This will be done by regular performance reviews.

Inappropriate behaviour towards students will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing is paramount.

The following strategies will be used for the ongoing supervision and management of staff:

- Conduct a risk assessment to determine the level of ongoing supervision and management necessary, considering the physical layout of the College any identified physical risks.
- College leaders will regularly walk-around classrooms and the College grounds.
- Staff contracts will set out standards for child safety performance and state how performance will be assessed.
- Child safety and wellbeing goals will be included in staff professional development plans.

- Child safety and wellbeing will be a regular agenda item for staff meetings at all levels and will focus on elements of the child safety framework, such as
  - identifying grooming and other behaviour that could cause harm to a student
  - understanding what types of behaviour should be reported to school leaders
  - how to respond to an incident, disclosure or suspicions of child abuse
  - identifying risks in the school's physical and online environment and who to report them to.
- Conduct formal and informal observations of staff working with students.
- Provide feedback to staff on how to support student's safety and wellbeing through regular check-ins or as appropriate.
- Ensure the Executive Principal manages a staff member whose behaviour raises child safety concerns. This includes keeping records of conversations and following up and monitor staff behaviour after immediate concerns have been addressed.
- Take early action to provide feedback to staff and correct any concerning or unsafe conduct to prevent harm before it occurs.
- Ensure systems are in place for recording information on staff conduct and any concerns raised.

d. Suitability of volunteers

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

14. Complaints and Reporting Processes (Standard 7)

The College fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, carers or guardians, and the College 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 our Complaints Policy and Procedure.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including College Board members) must follow our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures.

Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, College staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the College.

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

- the <u>Four Critical Actions</u> for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child
- the <u>Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending</u> for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending.

Our Diversity and Equity Procedure and Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment Policy cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

15. Child Safety Knowledge, Skills and Awareness (Standard 8)

Ongoing training and education is essential to ensuring that 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, the College will ensure 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.

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

- our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices including this policy and the Child Safety Code of Conduct,
- completing the e-learning module Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting 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 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 will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

Other strategies and actions the College will take include:

- Providing training and information to staff and volunteers engaged in child-connected work that is appropriate to their role on how to identify and manage child safety risks (relevant to their role) without compromising a child or student's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities
- Supporting staff and volunteers to implement the Child Safety Policy and the Child Safety Code of Conduct where these policies apply to their role and responsibilities.

16. Physical and Online Environments (Standard 9)

The College recognises that identifying and managing risks is an important part of keeping students safe. This includes considering the growing risks posed by online domains which schools also need to actively manage.

The College will ensure this standard is met by:

- Supervising students in the physical environment of the College, including toilet areas, during the school day, breaks and before and after school.
- Identifying and mitigating child safety risks at the College site including buildings, grounds, classrooms, corridors, pickup/drop off areas and areas that are out of sight.
- Using CCTV to monitor activity across the building.
- Implementing an approval process for excursions or offsite activities to ensure supervision ratios are appropriate according to activity and cohort attending. This is managed by the organising teacher or teacher in charge in consultation with the Executive Principal.

- Wherever practical, visit each RTO provider which the College may use as part of the processes of selecting a suitable provider, to discuss child safety matters and to inform a risk assessment.
- Ensuring RTOs engaged by the College understand and act in accordance with the College's Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- Providing visitors, volunteers and contractors with a copy of the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- Ensuring all visitors, volunteers and contractors attending the College register at Reception, display an appropriate visitor/volunteer badge and provide a Working with Children Clearance card.
- Requiring parents, carers and guardians, students and staff adhere to relevant codes of conduct which outline safe methods for online communication between staff and students.
- Implementing the Digital Learning Policy and Internet and ICT Use Agreement and informing students and their families about appropriate use of technology.
- Promoting safe and responsible use of online platforms.
- Ensuring security settings for internet and social media use are in place.
- Only using images of students for marketing and/or social media that have been approved by parents, carers or guardians for that purpose.
- Maintaining and reviewing the Child Safe Risk Register related to the physical and online environment.
- Ensuring teaching staff adhere to the VIT Code of Conduct principles, particularly those in relation to personal relationships with students or their families.

17. Review of Child Safety Practices (Standard 10)

The College has established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

The College will:

- Review and evaluate child safety polices and strategies annually or after any significant child safety incident,
- Analyse complaints, concerns and safety incidents to identify causes and systematic failures to inform continuous improvement,
- Share review findings with the College community.

The College will implement this standard by:

- Monitoring and managing child safety risks using the Child Safe Risk Register.
- Determining the causes of any child safety incidents and monitor for repeat issues or systemic failures.
- Developing a work plan and establish a working group led by the Assistant Principal (as the child safety champion) to review and update policies and procedures.
- Including students, families, staff and volunteers in surveys or focus groups to review the accessibility, level of awareness and effectiveness of child-safe policies and procedures.
- Making review findings and recommendations easy to access and understand.
- Including findings from child safety reviews in child safety training for staff and volunteers.
- Communicating review outcomes to students in age-appropriate ways.
- Informing the school community of any child safety policy changes where relevant or applicable.

18. Implementation of Child Safety Practices (Standard 11)

The College will clearly document and communicate its approach to child safety to ensure all adults involved with students are aware of their role and responsibilities in relation to child safety.

The College will:

- Publish the College child safety policies on our website.
- Integrate child safety into staff and volunteer induction and training processes.
- Provide training to staff, including College Board, on these policies and procedures.
- Display PROTECT Child Safety posters in various locations around the College.
- Nominate and support a staff member as the child safety champion (currently the Assistant Principal) to promote, monitor and report on the implementation of the College's child safety strategies.
- Manage child safety risks relating to child abuse using the Child Safety Risk Register.
- Regularly communicate child safety matters to the College community via the website and/or College Newsletter.
- Seek feedback from staff, students, families and community members in the creation of policies.
- Train staff, volunteers and the College Board on College policies and their responsibilities.

19. Communication

The College will communicate its child safety strategies through:

- the College website, ensuring key child safety policies are accessible online, including this policy, the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure;
- the Teachers' Handbook;
- induction programs and professional development or training programs for new staff and College Board members;
- direct provision of this policy to new staff, volunteers (if applicable), College Board members, parents, carers and guardians, and students;
- displaying PROTECT around the College;
- providing relevant updates in the College Newsletter;
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and College Board meetings.

20. Privacy, Information Sharing and Records Management

The College collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws.

The College acknowledges that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing. We manage our records in accordance with our Records Management Policy and the Public Records Act 1973 (Vic).

21. Related Policies

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

- Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment Policy

- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure
- Child Safety Risk Register
- Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Digital Learning Policy including Internet and ICT Use Agreement
- Diversity and Equity Procedure
- Privacy Policy
- Records Management Policy
- Staff Recruitment and Personnel Procedure
- Student Behaviour Management Policy
- Visitors Policy
- Volunteers Policy

22. Resources

- [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](#)

23. Approval and Review

Document Owner:	Executive Principal
Approved by:	College Board
Approval date:	07 June 2024
Next review date:	June 2025 (and every 12 months thereafter or after any significant child safety incident)

Child	means a child or young person who is under the age of 18 years.

Child abuse	includes:
	
	   a) any act committed against a child involving:
	      1. a sexual offence or
	      2. an offence under section 49M of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
	   b) the infliction, on a child, of:
	      1. physical violence or
	      2. serious emotional or psychological harm serious neglect of a child
	   c) the serious neglect of a child.

Child abuse (emotional)	Emotional child abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated, or frightened by threats. It also includes hostility, derogatory name-calling and put-downs, and persistent coldness from a person to the extent that the child suffers, or is likely to suffer, emotional or psychological harm to their physical or developmental health.
Child abuse (physical)	Physical child abuse is any non-accidental infliction of physical violence on a child by any person. It can be inflicted in many ways, including beating, shaking or burning and assault with implements and female genital mutilation.
Child abuse (sexual)	Child sexual abuse is when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve them in sexual activity. It can include a wide range of sexual activity. Sexual offences are governed by the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.)
Child Safety	Child safety includes matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to suspicions, incidents, disclosures or allegations of child abuse.

Child-connected work	Child connected work means:
	
	   a) work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present
	   b) for the purposes of a school boarding premises, work authorised by the provider of school boarding premises in a school boarding premises environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.
	   c) Note: Working with Children clearance is required by law only for people who engage in child-related work. Schools and school boarding premises may also choose to require suitability checks (including Working with Children clearance) for visitors and volunteers engaging in child-connected work.

Child-related work	The Worker Screening Act 2020 defines 'child-related work' as work which usually involves (or is likely to involve) direct contact with a child, irrespective of

	whether that contact is supervised or not, and in any of the child-related occupational fields listed in the Act.

The definition of direct contact includes oral, written or electronic communication as well as face-to-face and physical contact. 'Child-related work' may be either paid or unpaid (voluntary).

There are exemptions from the Act including people under 18 years of age, parent volunteers whose child ordinarily participates in the activity, sworn police officers, teachers currently registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching, and visiting workers who do not ordinarily reside and perform child-related work in Victoria, among others. |
Governing body (College Board)	Governing body is defined in the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 to mean: a) in relation to a government school, the school council constituted in relation to that school b) in relation to a non-Government school, the person or body responsible for the governance, conduct or management of the school

School/college environment	School/college environment means any of the following physical, online or virtual places, used during or outside school hours:
	a) A campus of the school
	b) Online or virtual school environments made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child or student (including email, intranet systems, software applications, collaboration tools, and online services)
	c) Other locations provided by the school or through a third-party provider for a child or student to use including, but not limited to, locations used for:
	  1. camps
	  2. approved homestay accommodation
	  3. delivery of education and training such as registered training organisations, TAFEs, non-school senior secondary providers or another school; or (iv) sporting events, excursions, competitions or other events.

School governing authority In this document referred to as the College Board	School governing authority means: a) the proprietor of a school, including a person authorised to act for or on behalf of the proprietor b) the governing body for a school (however described), as authorised by the proprietor of a school or the ETR Act c) the principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school, the school governing body, or the ETR Act.

School staff (College staff)	School staff means:
	a) in a government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:
	  1. employed under Part 2.4 of the ETR Act in the Government teaching service
	  2. employed under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act

	3. a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary) engaged by the school governing authority to perform child-related work
	b) in a non-Government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:
	1. directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority 2. a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary) engaged by the school governing authority to perform child-related work 3. a minister of religion, a religious leader or an employee or officer of a religious body associated with the school.
Student	Student means a person who is enrolled at or attends the school.
Volunteer	Volunteer means a person who performs work without remuneration or reward for the school.

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION   As a school staff member, you play a **critical role** in protecting children in your care.

- You **must** act, by following the Four Critical Actions, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief * that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.
- You **must** act if you form a suspicion/ reasonable belief, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).
- It is strongly recommended that you use the **Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template** to keep clear and comprehensive notes, even if you make a decision not to report.

A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

1 RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to **Action 2.**

If a child is at immediate risk of harm you **must** ensure their safety by:
- separating alleged victims and others involved
- administering first aid
- calling **000 for urgent medical and/ or police assistance** to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
- identifying a contact person at the school for future liaison with Police.

Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES / REFERRING TO SERVICES

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you **must** report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

Q: Where does the source of suspected abuse come from?

WITHIN THE SCHOOL

VICTORIA POLICE
You **must** report all instances of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor, volunteer or visitor to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report **internally** to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS
- School principal and/or leadership team
- Employee Conduct Branch
- DET Incident Support and Operations Centre.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
- School principal and/or leadership team
- Diocesan education office.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS
- School principal and/or school chairperson
- Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978.**

All allegations of 'reportable conduct' **must** be reported as soon as possible to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS
- Employee Conduct Branch

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
- Diocesan education office

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS
- Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978.**

WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION
You **must** report to DHHS Child Protection if a child is considered to be:
- in need of protection from child abuse
- at risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.

VICTORIA POLICE
You **must also** report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report **internally** to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS
- School principal and/or leadership team
- DET Incident Support and Operations Centre.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
- School principal and/or leadership team
- Diocesan education office.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS
- School principal and/or chairperson.

OTHER CONCERNS

If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold **significant concerns** for their wellbeing you **must** still act. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from:
- Child FIRST/The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support)
- DHHS Child Protection

For suspected student sexual assault, please follow the **Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending.**

3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

Your principal **must** consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:
- **not to contact** the parents/carer (e.g. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parent/carer to be contacted)
- **to contact** the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion)
- **how to communicate** with all relevant parties with consideration for their safety.

Ellen Young (ellenly60@gmail.com) is signed in

4 PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Your school **must** provide support for children impacted by abuse. This should include the development of a **Student Support Plan** in consultation with wellbeing professionals. This is an essential part of your duty of care requirements.

Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals and support.

You **must** follow the **Four Critical Actions** every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.

CONTACT

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION
AREA
North Division **1300 664 977**
South Division **1300 655 795**
East Division **1300 360 391**
West Division (Rural) **1800 075 599**
West Division (Metro) **1300 664 977**

AFTER HOURS
After hours, weekends, public holidays **13 12 78.**

CHILD FIRST
https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/referral-and-support-teams

ORANGE DOOR
https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/the-orange-door.html

VICTORIA POLICE
000 or your local police station

DET INCIDENT SUPPORT AND OPERATIONS CENTRE
1800 126 126

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT UNIT
1800 126 126

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH
(03) 9637 2595

DIOCESAN OFFICE
Melbourne **(03) 9267 0228**
Ballarat **(03) 5337 7135**
Sale **(03) 5622 6600**
Sandhurst **(03) 5443 2377**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA
(03) 9825 7200

THE LOOKOUT
The LOOKOUT has a service directory, information, and evidence based guidance to help you respond to family violence: http://www.lookout.org.au

Family violence victims/survivors can be referred to **1800 Respect** for counselling, information and a referral service: **1800 737 732.**

PROTECT | THE EDUCATION STATE | VICTORIA State Government Education and Training | cecv catholic education commission of victoria ltd | Independent Schools Victoria