



## **Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy**

### **1. The College commitment to child safety**

Overnewton Anglican Community College (The **College**) is a child safe organisation committed to welcoming all children, young people and their families.

We are committed to providing an environment where our 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. College child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

We have **zero tolerance** of child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our College environments.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults 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 College environment. When child safety concerns are suspected, identified or reported, we treat these concerns seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD), international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) 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 College, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our 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 College child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, volunteers and the College community, generally, to inform our ongoing strategies.

### **2. Purpose**

This policy provides an overview of the College's approach to implementing *Ministerial Order 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools* (**Ministerial Order 1359**) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments, Refer to Section 22.



It informs our College 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. Scope

This policy:

Applies to all College staff, contractors and volunteers, whether or not they work in direct contact with students, including a minister of religion. It also applies to College board members where indicated.

Applies in all physical and online College environments used by students during or outside of College hours, including other locations provided by for a student's use and those provided through third-party providers.

This policy should be read together with other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and codes – Refer to Section 22.

### 4. Definitions

In this Policy, the following terms have the following meanings unless the context requires otherwise:

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

**Child abuse** includes:

- any act committed against a child involving:
  - a sexual offence; or
  - an offence of grooming (as per s49M(1) of the *Crimes Act 1958*); or
- the infliction, on a child, of:
  - physical violence; or
  - serious emotional or psychological harm;
- serious neglect of a child; or
- the types of harm set out in below in Part 5 of this policy.

**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.

**College environment** means any of the following physical, online or virtual places, used during or outside College hours:

- a campus of the College;
- online or virtual College environments made available or authorised by the College governing authority for use by a child or student (including email, intranet systems, software applications, collaboration tools, and online services); and
- other locations provided by the College or through a third-party provider for a child or student to use including, but not limited to, locations used for:



- College camps;
- approved homestay accommodation;
- delivery of education and training such as registered training organisations, TAFEs, non-school senior secondary providers or another school; or
- sporting events, excursions, competitions or other events.

## 5. Types of Harm

**Physical Harm** occurs when a child suffers, or is likely to suffer, significant harm from an injury inflicted by a child's parent, caregiver or any other person. It may be the consequence of punishment or physically aggressive treatment of a child.

**Sexual Harm** occurs when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve the child in sexual activity. Physical force is sometimes involved. Child sexual abuse involves a wide range of sexual activity.

**Grooming** refers to a situation whereby words or conduct, there is communication with student with the intention of facilitating the child's engagement in or involvement in a sexual offence, whether or not there is a response made to the communication.

**Emotional Harm** occurs when a child's parent or caregiver repeatedly rejects the child or uses threats to frighten the child. This may involve name calling, put downs or continual coldness to the extent that it significantly damages the child's physical, social, intellectual or emotional development.

**Serious Neglect** refers to a situation in which a child's parent or caregiver fails to provide the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical attention or supervision, to the extent that the child's health and development is, or is likely to be significantly harmed.

## 6. Legal responsibilities

The College takes our legal responsibilities seriously and our commitments to a child safe environment are to be read in conjunction with Ministerial Order 1359.

In addition, the College has legal responsibilities under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.



Furthermore, any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties (*See Appendix A*). Any legal obligations under this policy do not abrogate or discharge a mandatory reporter from their duty.

## **7. Roles and responsibilities**

### **College leadership team**

The College Leadership Team (CLT), particularly the Principal and Deputy Principals are responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that the policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

The Principal and Deputy Principals, as representatives of the CLT will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing Compliance, 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 council meetings
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of responding to abuse; and
- 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.

### **College staff and volunteers**

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the College, and always follow the College's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures;
- act in accordance with the College's Child Safety Code of Conduct;
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#);
- 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.



## **College Board**

In performing the functions and powers given to them under the College's constitution, 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;
- undertake annual training on child safety;
- approve updates to, and act in accordance with the Child Safe Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to College board members; and
- as delegated to the Principal, ensure that selection, supervision and management practices are child safe.

## **Specific staff child safety responsibilities**

The persons responsible for the implementation of child safe policies and procedures are as follows:

<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Position(s)</b>
Promptly managing the College's response to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse, and ensuring that the allegation or disclosure is taken seriously	Head of Student Services, Principal, relevant Deputy Principal and relevant Head of School and/or Deputy Head of School
Responding appropriately to a child who makes or is affected by an allegation of child abuse	Head of Student Services and student services team
Monitoring overall College compliance with these policies and procedures	Head of Student Services and Risk and Compliance Coordinator
Managing an alternative procedure for responding to an allegation or disclosure if the person allocated responsibility cannot perform their role	Principal and relevant Deputy Principal
Ensuring key people have appropriate skills and capacity to undertake child safety roles and responsibilities, including teachers, student counsellors and others	Head of Student Services and Risk and Compliance Coordinator
Ongoing induction and training for all staff and volunteers in child safety, including how to recognise and respond to child abuse	Head of Student Services and Risk and Compliance Coordinator

<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Position(s)</b>
Communication relating to child safety with community and stakeholders	Principal and Deputy Principals
Review of Child Safe Policies and Procedures	Risk and Compliance Coordinator
College staff selection, supervision and management practices for a child-safe environment	Director of Human Resources
Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse	Risk and Compliance Coordinator
Strategies to promote child empowerment and participation	Relevant Heads of School

## **8. Child Safety Code of Conduct**

The College’s 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.

All of The College staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our *Agreed Staff Expectations Policy*, *Community Code of Conduct for Adults* and *Child Safety Code of Conduct*, which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children and includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

## **9. Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing**

At the College we identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments and online environments.

In particular, the College seeks to take the following steps and considerations to identify and manage risks:

1. identify the College’s child safety risks across the range of school environments (including excursions, camps, online).
2. identify any existing risk mitigation measures or existing controls.
3. assess and rate the College’s child safety risks given the existing controls in place, taking into account the likelihood of risk, and the likely consequence of the risk.
4. if the risk rating is more than the ‘acceptable level’, identify further risk management strategies through additional treatments or other





prevention, detection or mitigation strategies and then re-assess the risk (once in place these treatments will then become controls).

The College Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage these risks. The Risk Management Committee will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

## **10. A culturally safe environment**

At the College, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe College where the strengths of Aboriginal (inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples) culture, values and practices are respected.

Culture safety includes being provided with a safe, nurturing and positive environment for Aboriginal children and students where they feel comfortable being themselves and expressing their culture, including their spirituality and belief systems and are supported by carers who respect their Aboriginality and encourage their sense of self and identity.

We consider how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. 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 College planning, policies and activities.

The College has developed the following strategies to promote cultural safety in the College community:

- incorporate Aboriginal names, art and flags into the College community as recognition of the local Aboriginal community;
- establish and maintain a Reconciliation Action Plan and associated committee;
- establish connections with Aboriginal communities and provide opportunities for students to engage and learn with such communities;
- ensure a commitment to culturally safe environments is embedded in all policies and procedures, specifically outlining the clear consequences of racism;
- build College-wide knowledge of Aboriginal histories, cultures, perspectives, values and skills and attitudes and ensure all stakeholders are familiar with this knowledge, including staff and students;
- incorporate cultural safety into the education of students and in the induction and professional development of College staff and volunteers; and
- implement strategies to engage and empower students and families in the development of a culturally safe environment, particularly considering the needs of Aboriginal students and families.

## **11. Student empowerment**

This policy is intended to empower children to be vital and active participants at the College. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.



To support child safety and wellbeing at the College, we are committed to creating an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to the College's 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 a whole College approach to Respectful Relationships and supporting an inclusive environment through the College's values and pastoral care program.

We inform students of their rights through our whole College approach to Respectful Relationships and age-appropriate curriculum and give them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults and other students and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves and their peers. Furthermore, 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.

We are committed to promoting child safety in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand and user-friendly to children.

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; and
- support the student and keep them (and their parents and carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

## **12. Family engagement**

The College families and the College 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 the College, we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about the College'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.

The College has developed the following strategies to promote family engagement in regard to child safety:

- utilise the Family Involvement Program to promote community engagement and empowerment;
- ensure the Community Code of Conduct and Child Safety Code of Conduct are adhered to; and





- encourage each College and teachers engage with families and organise regular opportunities for communication and participation in decisions regarding the safety and wellbeing of their children.
- all of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents on our Publications or in hard copy by request.
- notices and emails 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 digitally.

### **13. Diversity and equity**

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

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

We are committed to paying 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 children and young people;
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- children and young people with disabilities;
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence;
- international students; and
- children and young people who identified as LGBTIQ+.

Our Gender Diversity and Inclusion Policy provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

### **14. Suitable staff and volunteers**

At the College, we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

#### **Recruitment and Human Resources Practices**

The College understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations to child safety. We apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements that clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities, setting out the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety and the job occupant's essential or relevant qualifications, experiences and attributes in relation to



child safety. We will also endeavour to ensure all applicants for jobs that involve child-connected work are informed of the College's child safety practices, including the Agreed Staff Expectations Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct.

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

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers and contractors are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check.

In accordance with our Recruitment Policy and Procedures, we will make reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about an applicant who may engage in child-connected work:

- Working with Children Check status, or similar checks;
- proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications;
- the person's history of work involving children; and
- references that address the person's suitability for the job and working with children.

All newly appointed staff will be required to participate in our Child Safety and Wellbeing induction program, "Staff Onboarding Information". The program will include a focus on:

- The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- The Child Safety Code of Conduct
- The Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures and
- Any other child safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children 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 and training.

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

This information will assist in ensuring we are recruiting the right people.

### **Fair procedures for personnel**

Whilst the safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern, we are also committed to being fair and just to personnel. We endeavour to record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using appropriate documentation. All records are securely stored.



If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we seek to provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as a College take.

Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

## **15. Induction and training**

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

- this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy;
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct;
- the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including mandatory reporting); and
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that is considered appropriate to the nature of the role.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand the College's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

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

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be regularly supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards child is safe and appropriate. Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with the College's policies and legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

### **Suitability of volunteers**

All volunteers are required to comply with all relevant College policies and procedures.

## **16. Child safety knowledge, skills and awareness**

Ongoing training and education are 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, our 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:

- the College'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 record keeping obligations; and
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the College 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.

### **College Board training and education**

To ensure the College's Board are equipped with the knowledge required to make decisions in the best interests of student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our College environment, the Board is trained annually. Training will include 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 College environment; and
- the College's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices.

## **17. Complaints and reporting processes**

The College seeks to foster a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents 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.

There are clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in the College's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Procedure and Dispute Resolution Policy.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers must follow the College's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Procedure. This procedure addresses complaints and concerns of child



abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors and any other person while connected to the College.

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

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

The College's Taking Responsibility and Anti-Bullying Policies address complaints and concerns relating to student violence and other harmful behaviours.

## 18. Communications

The College is committed to communication our child safety strategies to the College community through:

- ensuring that all key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on the College's public website;
- displaying appropriate child safety and wellbeing displays around the College;
- updates in the College newsletter and through the Parent Portal; and
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at leadership meets, staff meetings and College Board meetings.

## 19. Privacy and Information Sharing

The College collects, uses and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with the relevant privacy laws. Information relating to how the College collects, uses and discloses information is outlined in the College's Privacy Policy.

The College will endeavour to respect the privacy of the personal information of individuals, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to try to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

## 20. Records management

The College acknowledges that appropriate records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the College's Records Management Policy and Procedures.



## 21. Review of child safety practices

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

The College will:

- regularly review this policy to ensure compliance with all child safe related laws, regulations and standards;
- review and update this policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident;
- analyse any complaints, concerns and safety incidents to improve policy and practice; and
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with relevant stakeholders.

## 22. Related Policies and Procedures

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

- Anti Bullying Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy
- Responding to Reportable Allegations Policy
- Dispute Resolutions Policy
- Community Code of Conduct
- Taking Responsibility Policy
- Records Management Policy and Procedures
- Child Safety Document Retention Procedures
- Gender Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Related Department of Education and Training policies

- [Bullying Prevention and Response Policy](#)
- [Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes](#)
- [Complaints Policy](#)
- [Contractor OHS Management Policy](#)
- [Digital Learning in Schools Policy](#)
- [Family Violence Support](#)
- [Protecting Children: Reporting Obligations Policy](#)
- [Policy and Guidelines for Recruitment in Schools](#)
- [Reportable Conduct Policy](#)
- [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#)
- [Supervision of Students Policy](#)
- [Visitors in Schools Policy](#)
- [Volunteers in Schools Policy](#)





- [Working with Children and other Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors](#)

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](#)

Ministerial Order No. 1359

- [Ministerial Order](#)

### **23. Policy status and review**

Head of Student Services and Risk and Compliance Coordinator is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at least every two years. The review will include input from the Principal, Deputy Principals, Director of Human Resource and final approval Risk Management Committee.