



# CHILD SAFE POLICY

## 1. BACKGROUND

This Child Safe Policy affirms the commitment of Melton Secondary College (MSC) to zero tolerance of child abuse. This policy explains and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of all MSC staff, as mandatory reporters, in the exercise of our duty of care towards our students' safety and well-being.

This policy is aligned to the new PROTECT Child Safe Standards, in accordance with Ministerial Order No. 870, which operationalises the Child Safe Standards in all Victorian schools (on 1 August 2016) <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/default.aspx>

## 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the strong commitment of MSC to the care, safety and wellbeing of all students at our school. It provides an outline of the policies, procedures and strategies developed to keep students safe from harm, including all forms of abuse in our school environment, on campus, online and in other locations provided by the school.

This policy takes into account relevant legislative requirements within the state of Victoria, including the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in [Ministerial Order No. 870](#). This policy applies to school staff, including school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy.

## 3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

State schools have a moral and legal responsibility to create nurturing school environments where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard and they are safe and feel safe.

The following principles underpin our commitment to child safety at MSC

- a) All students deserve, as a fundamental right, safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect.
- b) Our school works in partnership with families and the community to ensure that they are engaged in decision-making processes, particularly those that have an impact on child safety and protection.
- c) All students have the right to a thorough and systematic education in all aspects of personal safety, in partnership with their parents/guardians/caregivers.
- d) All adults in our school, including teaching and non-teaching staff, volunteers and contractors as well as the broader school community have a responsibility to care for children and young people, to positively promote their wellbeing and to protect them from any kind of harm or abuse.
- e) The policies, guidelines and codes of conduct for the care, wellbeing and protection of students are based on honest, respectful and trusting relationships between adults and children and young people.
- f) Policies and practices demonstrate compliance with legislative requirements and cooperation with governments, the police and human services agencies.
- g) All persons involved in situations where harm is suspected or disclosed must be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect.

- h) Staff, volunteers, contractors, parents/guardians and students should feel free to raise concerns about child safety, knowing these will be taken seriously by school leadership.
- i) Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained, with information being provided to those who have a right or a need to be informed, either legally or pastorally.

## **4. IMPLEMENTATION**

### **4.1 Policy Commitments**

All students enrolled at MSC have the right to feel safe and be safe. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we do not and will not tolerate child abuse. We aim to create a child-safe and child-friendly environment where children are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety. There is particular attention paid to the most vulnerable children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with a disability.

#### **Our commitment to our students**

- a) We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people enrolled in our school.
- b) We commit to providing children and young people with positive and nurturing experiences.
- c) We commit to listening to children and young people and empowering them by taking their views seriously, and addressing any concerns that they raise with us.
- d) We commit to taking action to ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse or harm.
- e) We commit to teaching children and young people the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing.
- f) We commit to seeking input and feedback from students regarding the creation of a safe school environment.

#### **Our commitment to parents and guardians**

- a) We commit to communicating honestly and openly with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children.
- b) We commit to engaging with, and listening to, the views of parents and carers about our child-safety practice, policies and procedures.
- c) We commit to transparency in our decision-making with parents and carers where it will not compromise the safety of children or young people.
- d) We commit to acknowledging the cultural diversity of students and families, and being sensitive to how this may impact on student safety issues.
- e) We commit to continuously reviewing and improving our systems to protect children from abuse.

#### **Our commitment to our school staff (school employees, volunteers and contractors.)**

- a) We commit to providing all MSC staff with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles. This will include regular and appropriate learning opportunities.
- b) We commit to providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm policy and procedures in relation to child safety and young people's protection and wellbeing. This will include annual training in the principles and intent of the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct, and staff responsibilities to report concerns.
- c) We commit to listening to all concerns voiced by MSC staff, volunteers, and contractors about keeping children and young people safe from harm.
- d) We commit to providing opportunities for MSC school employees, volunteers and contractors to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.

## 4.2 Responsibilities and Organisational Arrangements

Everyone employed or volunteering at MSC has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all students is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

The school has allocated roles and responsibilities for child safety as follows:

### Guide to responsibilities of School Leadership

The principal, the school governing authority and school leaders at MSC recognise their particular responsibility to ensure the development of preventative and proactive strategies that promote a culture of openness, awareness of and shared responsibility for child safety.

Responsibilities include:

- a) creating an environment for children and young people to be safe and to feel safe
- b) upholding high principles and standards for all staff, volunteers, and contractors
- c) promoting models of behaviour between adults and children and young people based on mutual respect and consideration
- d) ensuring thorough and rigorous practices are applied in the recruitment, screening and ongoing professional learning of staff
- e) ensuring that school personnel have regular and appropriate learning to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters
- f) providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm legislative obligations, policy and procedures in relation to child and young people's protection and wellbeing
- g) ensuring the school meets the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in [Ministerial Order No. 870](#).

### Guide to Responsibilities of School Staff

Responsibilities of school staff (school employees, volunteers and contractors) include:

- a) treating children and young people with dignity and respect, acting with propriety, providing a duty of care, and protecting children and young people in their care
- b) following the legislative and internal school processes in the course of their work, if they form a reasonable belief that a child or young person has been or is being abused or neglected
- c) providing a physically and psychologically safe environment where the wellbeing of children and young people is nurtured
- d) undertaking regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to child safety and the wellbeing of children and young people
- e) assisting children and young people to develop positive, responsible and caring attitudes and behaviours which recognise the rights of all people to be safe and free from abuse
- f) following the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct.

## 4.3 Expectations of our School Staff – Child Safety Code of Conduct

At MSC and within our community, we expect school employees, volunteers and contractors to proactively ensure the safety of students at all times and to take appropriate action if there are concerns about the safety of any child at the school. All college staff must remain familiar with the relevant laws, the code of conduct, and policies and procedures in relation to child protection and to comply with all requirements. We have developed a **Child Safety Code of Conduct** which recognises the critical role that school staff play in protecting the students in our care and establishes clear expectations of school employees, volunteers and contractors for appropriate behaviour with children in order to safeguard them against abuse and or neglect.

Our Code also protects school staff through clarification of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

#### 4.4 Student Safety and participation

At MSC, we actively encourage all students to openly express their views and feel comfortable about giving voice to the things that are important to them.

We teach students about what they can do if they feel unsafe and enable them to understand, identify, discuss and report on child safety. We listen to and act on any concerns students, or their parents or carers, raise with us.

The MSC Student Voice and Leadership program provides a forum for students to raise concerns including issues relating to safety and wellbeing.

#### 4.5 Reporting and Responding

Our school records any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and stores the records in accordance with security and privacy requirements. Our school complies with legal obligations that relate to managing the risk of child abuse under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.), the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.) and the recommendations of the [Betrayal of Trust](#) report.

Child protection reporting obligations fall under separate pieces of legislation with differing reporting requirements.

Our school's **Child Protection – Mandatory Reporting Policy** [[Insert link to your school's Child Protection – Reporting Obligations Policy](#)], updated on [[insert date](#)], sets out the actions required under the relevant legislation when there is a reasonable belief that a child at our school is in need of protection or a criminal offence has been committed, and provides guidance and procedures on how to make a report.

Our policy assists staff, volunteers and families to:

- a) identify the indicators of a child or young person who may be in need of protection
- b) understand how a 'reasonable belief' is formed
- c) make a report of a child or young person who may be in need of protection
- d) comply with mandatory reporting obligations under child protection law and their legal obligations relating to criminal child abuse and grooming under criminal law.

Our school has also established internal processes to ensure that appropriate action is taken to respond to concerns about the wellbeing and/or safety of a student.

#### 4.6 Screening and recruitment of School Staff

MSC will apply thorough and rigorous screening processes in the recruitment of employees and volunteers involved in child-connected work. Our commitment to child safety and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements for such employee, contractor and volunteer positions, and all applicants are provided with copies of the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct and the Child Safety Policy.

When recruiting and selecting employees, contractors and volunteers involved in child-connected work, we make all reasonable efforts to:

- a) confirm the applicant's Working with Children Check and National Police Check status and/or professional registration (as relevant)
- b) obtain proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications

- c) verify the applicant's history of work involving children
- d) obtain references that address the applicant's suitability for the job and working with children.

We have processes for monitoring and assessing the continuing suitability of school staff to work with children, including regular reviews of the status of Working with Children Checks and staff professional registration requirements such as Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration.

#### 4.7 Child Safety – Education and Training for School Staff

MSC provides employees and volunteers with regular and appropriate opportunities to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters. This includes induction, ongoing training and professional learning to ensure that everyone understands their professional and legal obligations and responsibilities, and the procedures for reporting suspicion of child abuse and neglect.

- a) Staff Induction Checklist details training and information provided to staff on Child Safe Policy and practices.
- b) Staff are required to complete the online DET mandatory reporting module and VRQA Child Safe videos
- c) Ongoing professional learning is also provided by the Student Wellbeing team.

#### 4.8 Risk Management

At MSC we are committed to proactively and systematically identifying and assessing risks to student safety across our whole school environment, and reducing or eliminating (where possible) all potential sources of harm. We document, implement, monitor and periodically review our risk management strategies for child safety and ensure that the strategies change as needed and as new risks arise.

### 5. EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every four years as part of the School Review, or following significant incidents, if they occur, and through requests by School Council, parents, students or staff within the timeframe stated above.

### 6. REFERENCES

- a) Crimes Act 1958 –'failure to disclose' offence –commenced operation on 27October 2014
- b) Working with Children Act 2005
- c) Ministerial Order No 870 <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/protect>
- d) <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/schoolsguide.aspx>
- e) <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/reportingabuse.aspx>

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