Collingwood College

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

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Review By: Sam Luck



Help for non-English speakers
If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact the school office.
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Purpose

The purpose of this policy it to provide an overview of our school's approach to implementing Ministerial Order 1359 which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

The Collingwood College *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy* demonstrates our school's commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe. This policy informs our school community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

Scope

This policy:

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

Definitions

The following terms in this policy have specific definitions:

- child
- child safety
- child abuse

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

Our commitment to child safety

Collingwood College is committed to child safety. We believe that all children should be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, staff and volunteers. We practise **zero tolerance** of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns are treated very seriously and consistently with our policies and procedures. We acknowledge and practise legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are concerned about a child's safety.

Collingwood College is committed to preventing child abuse and early identification of risks and risk minimisation. Our human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers support child safety. We regularly train and educate our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

All members of our community are supported and respected. We are committed to the safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, our fee-paying international students, students with disabilities, children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence and children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Policy Implementation

Roles and Responsibilities – School Leadership

Our school is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

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The principal 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 school community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and school 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
- create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

School staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school or the Department of Education and Training, and always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- act in accordance with our *Child Safety Code of Conduct*
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our *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.

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School council

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

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings
- undertake annual training on child safety
- approve updates to, and act in accordance with the *Child Safety Code of Conduct* to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members
- when hiring school council employees, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe. At our school, school council employment duties are delegated to the principal who is bound by this policy.

Specific Staff and Child Safety Responsibilities

Collingwood College has nominated child safety officers to support implementation of our child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training. The Child Safe Officers at Collingwood College are the principal, and assistant principals.

The responsibilities of the child safety officers are outlined at Guidance for child safety champions.

Our child safety officers are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

- The child safety officers are responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*. Anyone in our school community should approach the child safety officers if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*.
- The child safety officers are responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in other child safety policies and procedures, including the *Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, and Child Safety Risk Register.*

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Our school has also established a Child Safety and Wellbeing Team for child safety. The Child Safety and Wellbeing Team meet regularly to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing.

Our child safety officers monitor the Child Safety Risk Register.

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 school.

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

Managing Risks to Child safety and Wellbeing

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

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

Establishing a Culturally Safe Environment

At Collingwood College, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school. We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and young people with disabilities

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- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- international students
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

At Collingwood College we think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities. We respect the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices. Collingwood College uses the Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026 to guide the school's support for Aboriginal self-determination.

At Collingwood College:

- We equip staff, students, volunteers and the school community to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and students
- We adopt measures to ensure racism is identified, confronted and not tolerated
- We address any instances of racism within the school environment with appropriate consequences
- We actively support participation and inclusion in the school by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, students and their families

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

- Begin events and meetings with a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country as a standing agenda item. Use this as an opportunity to pause and reflect or open a discussion
- Fly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags on school grounds
- Display plaques and signs to Acknowledge Country and Traditional Owners
- Celebrate the local Aboriginal community in communications with students, staff, volunteers and families
- Share information through school newsletters, parent information nights and on the school website.

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- Learn more about Aboriginal histories and cultures, both locally and across Australia
- Speak with respect and confidence about Aboriginal culture, knowledge systems and people
- Build schoolwide knowledge of Aboriginal histories, cultures, perspectives, values, skills and attitudes.

Our *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

Student Empowerment

To support child safety and wellbeing at Collingwood College, we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students 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 school to ensure a sense of belonging through our whole school approach to developing respectful relationships, our student *Code of Conduct* and our school values.

We inform students of their rights through our whole school approach to wellbeing through the Collingwood College Behaviour model, Respectful relationships (RR) and our Social and Emotional Learning programs 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 school reception and on our school website.

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

At Collingwood College we:

- Display student friendly posters promoting student voice and agency
- Invite students to provide feedback on school-wide decisions and take their views into account in school decision-making.

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- Demonstrate that the school takes students seriously by acting on their concerns
- Provide students with information about complaint processes
- Give students a variety of ways to raise concerns through regular surveys
- Support all students to identify trusted adults and friends they can talk to about a concern at school, at home or in the community
- Teach students practical protective strategies, including:
    - what to do when they feel unsafe
    - phrases they can use to raise an objection
    - pathways for raising safety concerns, and
    - online safety behaviours.
- Provide a range of age-appropriate picture books, fiction and non-fiction that include:
    - children's rights and empowerment themes
    - cultural and linguistic diversity
    - neurodiverse characters and people with disability
    - diversity in sexual orientation and gender
- Deliver age-appropriate curriculum content about safe behaviour, respectful relationships, sexuality, consent and sexual abuse prevention through our wellbeing programs.
- Educate staff to uphold Aboriginal cultural safety and be respectful of identity and culture.
- Train staff and volunteers to facilitate child-friendly ways for students to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns.
- Provide training to staff and volunteers to be attuned to signs of harm and risk factors in students.
- Remind staff and volunteers to recognise that students might communicate in different ways, including through verbal and non-verbal cues, play, body language, facial expressions, drawings or behaviours.

Family engagement

Our families and the school community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns. To support family engagement, at Collingwood College we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school's

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child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

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

We do this through the following ways:

- Publishing relevant child safety policies and procedures on our college website, in newsletters and through the COMPASS communication portal
- providing hard copies of child safety policies and procedures for parents at school reception
- school council meetings, subcommittees of school council, student, staff, and parent meetings
- Informing families and the school community through newsletters and on the school website 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 displayed across the school

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all. We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

Suitable Staff and Volunteers

At Collingwood 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.

Staff recruitment

When recruiting staff, we follow the DET recruitment policies and guidelines, available on the Policy and Advisory Library (PAL).

- Recruitment in Schools
- Suitability for Employment Checks
- School Council Employment

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- Contractor OHS Management.

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

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance or equivalent background check such as a Victorian Teaching Registration (VIT)
- 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.

Staff Induction

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

- the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy* (this document)
- the *Child Safety Code of Conduct*
- the *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures*
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

Ongoing Supervision and Management of Staff

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.

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.

Suitability of Volunteers

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

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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:

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

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

School Council Training and Education

To ensure our school council is 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 school environment, the council is trained at least annually. Training includes guidance on:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse
- child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment

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- Collingwood College child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices

Complaints and Reporting procedures

Collingwood College fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our school's *Complaints Policy* which is publicly available on the school website.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including school council employees must follow our *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures*. Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school.

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

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

Our *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* and *Bullying Prevention Policy* cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

Privacy and Information Sharing

Collingwood College collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws. For information on how our school collects, uses and discloses information refer to: Schools' Privacy Policy.

Records Management

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the Department of Education and Training's policy - Records Management – School Records.

Review of Child Safety practices

At Collingwood College, we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

- review and improve our policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community.

Communication

Collingwood College is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- Ensuring that the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document), Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures* are available on the school website and through the COMPASS communication portal
- Provide reminders once per term in the school newsletter and through COMPASS posts of our school's commitment to child safety
- Ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership and staff meetings for discussion
- Ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings for discussion

Further Information and Resources

Related School Policies/Documents:

- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
- Digital Learning Policy

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- Duty of Care Policy
- Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy
- Visitors Policy
- Volunteers Policy
- Yard Duty and Supervision Policy
- CSS Risk assessment register

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

Related DET 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

Policy Review and Approval

This policy will be reviewed every two years or if DET regulations change. Following every reportable incident, a review shall be conducted to assess whether

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Collingwood College's child protection policies or procedures require modification to better protect the children under their care. School council consultation will also be sought if any significant changes are made.

Policy last reviewed	December 2022
Approved by	Principal
Consultation (Recommended)	School staff/School Council August 2022
Next scheduled review date	December 2024

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