

Rationale

All Victorian schools are required to have a child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety that details:

- The principles that will guide the school in developing policies and procedures to create and maintain a child safe school environment; and
- The actions the school proposes to take to:
 - a) demonstrate its commitment to child safety and monitor the school's adherence to its child safety policy;
 - b) support, encourage and enable school staff, parents, and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters; and
 - c) support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.

Definitions

Child abuse: An act or omission by an adult that endangers or impairs a child's physical and/or emotional health and development. Child abuse can be a single incident but often takes place over time. Abuse, neglect and maltreatment are generic terms used to describe situations in which a child may need protection.

Child abuse includes any and all of the following:

Physical abuse: When a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from an injury inflicted by a parent/guardian, caregiver or other adult. The injury may be inflicted intentionally, or be the consequence of physical punishment or the physically aggressive treatment of a child. Physical injury and significant harm to a child can also result from neglect by a parent/guardian, caregiver or other adult. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures, poisoning, internal injuries, shaking injuries or strangulation.

Sexual abuse: When a person uses power or authority over a child, or inducements such as money or special attention, to involve the child in sexual activity. It includes a wide range of sexual behaviour from inappropriate touching/fondling of a child or exposing a child to pornography, to having sex with a child¹.

Emotional and psychological abuse: Involves continuing behaviour by adults towards children,

¹ Office of the Child Safety Commissioner, Victoria:
http://www.kids.vic.gov.au/downloads/childsafes_organisation.pdf

which erodes social competence or self-esteem over time². It occurs when a person engages in inappropriate behaviours, such as rejecting, ignoring, threatening or verbally abusing a child, or allowing others to do so (Office of the Child Safety Commissioner (OCSC), Victoria).

Racial, cultural and religious abuse: Conduct that demonstrates contempt, ridicule, hatred or negativity towards a child because of their race, culture or religion (OCSC).

Neglect: The failure to provide a child with 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 (Victorian Department of Human Services).

Exposure to domestic/family violence: When children and young people witness or experience the chronic, repeated domination, coercion, intimidation and victimisation of one person by another through physical, sexual and/or emotional means within intimate relationships (adapted from the Australian Medical Association definition).

Implementation

The College Leadership Team will implement the child safe standards and procedures across the College.

1. Procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of suspected child abuse

- 1.1. A person may form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection after becoming aware that a child's health, safety or wellbeing is at risk.
- 1.2. Reporting a belief, mandated staff members (teachers, principals and nurses) must make a report to the Victorian Child Protection Service as soon as practicable after forming a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection.
- 1.3. Staff members, whether or not mandated, need to report to the principal, student wellbeing leaders, assistant principals or heads of school their belief when the belief is formed in the course of undertaking their professional duties. A report must be made as soon as practicable after forming the belief and on each occasion on which they become aware of any further reasonable grounds for the belief.
- 1.4. If one staff member has a different view from another staff member about making a report and the staff member continues to hold the belief that a child is in need of protection, that person is obliged to make a report.
- 1.5. Please refer to the Department of Education Victoria Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedures Policy 2014 for procedures in response to allegations of child abuse.

² DHS, Office for Children:

http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/574210/child-sexual-abuse-understanding.pdf

1.6. These procedures do not:

- a) prohibit or discourage school staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse to a person external to a school;
- b) state or imply that it is the victim's responsibility to inform the police or other authorities of the allegation;
- c) require staff to make a judgment about the truth of the allegation of child abuse; or
- d) prohibit staff from making records in relation to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse

2. Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

- 2.1. Risk management strategies have been developed within the College Student Wellbeing policy and Staff Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- 2.2. If the College identifies risks of child abuse occurring in one or more school environments the authority must make a record of those risks and specify the action(s) the school will take to reduce or remove the risks (risk controls). Different risk controls may be necessary for particular groups of children depending on the nature of the risk and the diversity characteristics of children affected by the risk.
- 2.3. As part of its risk management strategy and practices, the College must monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls.
- 2.4. At least annually, the College must ensure that appropriate guidance and training is provided to the individual members of the College staff about:
 - a) individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse;
 - b) child abuse risks in the College environment; and
 - c) the College's current child safety standards.
- 2.5. We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently in line with department policy and ministerial order 870.
- 2.6. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children if applicable, to the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

3. Strategies to promote child empowerment and participation

3.1. The College authority must develop strategies to deliver appropriate education about:

- a) standards of behaviour for students attending the College;
- b) healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality);
- c) resilience; and
- d) child abuse awareness and prevention.

3.2. The College must promote the child safety standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children.

Related Policies / Documents

Student Wellbeing Policy

Staff Child Safety Code of Conduct

HGC Parent Handbook

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/default.aspx>

Evaluation

This policy was created in term 3 of 2016 This policy will be reviewed as part of the College's annual review cycle