

PROTECT



CHILD SAFE STANDARD 2: A CHILD SAFETY POLICY

Hazel Glen College	21. Child Safety Policy	
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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 college in developing policies and procedures to create and maintain a child safe school environment; and
- The actions the college proposes to take to:
 - a) demonstrate its commitment to child safety and monitor the college's adherence to its child safety policy;
 - b) support, encourage and enable college 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.

Purpose

Hazel Glen College's Child Safety Policy sets out the college's approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and provides the policy framework for the college's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, and contractors at the college, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people.

The policy will apply to the college environment, including:

- a campus of the college,
- online college environments (including email and intranet systems), and
- other locations provided by the college for a child's use (including locations used for college camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events)

Definitions:

Child-connected work: Child-connected work means work authorised by the college governing authority and performed by an adult in a college environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child safety: Child safety encompasses 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 incidents or allegations of child abuse.

College environment: College environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the college;
- online college environments (including email and intranet systems);
- other locations provided by the college for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

College staff: College staff means an individual working in a college environment who is:

- directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)
- a minister of religion.

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, maltreatment and grooming (refer to definitions) are generic terms used to describe situations in which a child may need protection.

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.

Emotional and psychological abuse: Involves continuing behaviour by adults towards children, which erodes social competence or self-esteem over time. 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).

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).

Grooming: Grooming is when a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child or young person for sexual activity at a later time.

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).

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

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 child.

Statement of commitment to child safety and child safety principles

Hazel Glen College is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

Hazel Glen College has zero tolerance for child abuse.

We are committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability and children who are vulnerable.

Every person involved in Hazel Glen College has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

Child safety principles

In its planning, decision-making and operations, Hazel Glen College will:

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
7. Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues;
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

A child safe culture

Hazel Glen College's culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise child safety concerns. This makes it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

All child safety documents, including this policy, the [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#), the college's [Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures](#), [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#) and the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) are readily available online and in hard copy upon request at the college's reception for all staff and students to read at any time.

As part of Hazel Glen College's child safe culture, the **College Leadership Team**, in accordance with Child Safe Standard 1, will:

- Ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at College Council meetings and staff meetings;
- Encourage and enable staff professional learning and training to build deeper understandings of child safety and prevention of abuse; and
- Ensure that no one is prohibited or discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to a person external to the college or from making records of any allegation.
- As part of Hazel Glen College's safe culture, teaching and leadership staff are required to:
 - Complete the Protecting Children – [Mandatory reporting and other obligations online module](#) every year;
 - Read the college's Child Safety Code of Conduct on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document;
 - Read the college's Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document; and
 - Read the college's Child Safety Policy on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document.
 - College leadership will maintain records of the above processes.
- Child safety is everyone's responsibility. All college staff are required to:

- Act in accordance with the college's Code of Conduct, which clearly sets out the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour;
- Act in accordance with the Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures at all times, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) where necessary;
- Act in accordance with their legal obligations (more information at https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/ChildSafeStandard5_SchoolsGuide.pdf), including:
 - Failure to disclose offence (applies to all adults)
 - Duty of care (applies to all college staff)
 - Mandatory reporting obligations (applies to all mandatory reporters, including teachers, principals, and registered doctors and nurses)
 - Failure to protect offence (applies to a person in a position of authority within the college)
 - Reportable conduct obligations (applies to College Leadership roles)
 - Organisational duty of care (applies to the college as an organisation).

Roles and responsibilities

College leaders and managers will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the college's Code of Conduct, which sets out clearly the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Specific child safety responsibilities:

- The staff member leading the Policy subcommittee is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy every 2 years.
- The College Leadership Team is responsible for monitoring the college's compliance with the Child Safety Policy.
- The College Leadership is responsible for informing the college community about this policy, and making it publicly available.
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in Hazel Glen College's other child safety policies and procedures, including the Code of Conduct, Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, and risk assessment register.

Human resources recruitment practices

Hazel Glen College applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children, including:

- We will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse.
- All prospective staff and volunteers are required to undergo National Criminal History Records check and maintain a valid Working with Children Check.
- All position descriptions for jobs that involve child-connected work with our college include the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities with respect to child safety and the job occupant's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety.
- We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety. Job advertisements for child-connected work include a link to the college's Code of Conduct, which is publicly available on our website.

- We carry out verbal reference checks with at least two referees to verify job applicants' history of and suitability for working with children. Our college also requires applicants for child-connected jobs to provide proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications.

The college's approach to human resources practices that ensure child safety can be found on the website at <http://www.hgc.vic.edu.au/child-safe/>.

Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in the college understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our college culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse, to 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.

New employees and volunteers will be inducted into the college and supervised regularly to ensure they understand our college's commitment to child safety, and that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. All employees of our college will be monitored and assessed via regular performance review to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through the Principal or Assistant Principal or directly to DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

The college has clear expectations for all staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. All staff must follow the college's Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) if there is an incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse. Immediate actions should include reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection/Victoria Police or another appropriate agency and notifying the principal or a member of the college leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns.

Hazel Glen College will never prohibit or discourage college staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse. The college will always take action to respond to a complaint in accordance with the college's Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures. In accordance with Action 4 of the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#), Hazel Glen College will provide ongoing support for students affected by child abuse.

The Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures can be found at <http://www.hgc.vic.edu.au/policies/>.

Risk reduction and management

Hazel Glen College believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes. The college recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.

We will identify and mitigate the risks of child abuse in college environments by taking into account the nature of each college environment, the activities expected to be conducted in that environment and the characteristics and needs of all children expected to be present in that environment.

Hazel Glen College will ensure that it keeps, reviews and continually updates a risk assessment register, including the actions the college will take to reduce or remove the identified risks.

Listening to, communicating with and empowering children

The college has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/carers. We encourage child and

parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/carers to understand their rights and their responsibilities. Our college is committed to supporting and encouraging students to use their voice to raise and share their concerns with a trusted adult at any time of need.

When the college is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct with or abuse of a child, the college will listen to the complainant's account of things and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (or their parents/carers, where appropriate) informed about progress.

The college will promote the Child Safe Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children, including:

- All of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for the students at Hazel Glen College to read.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the college.
- College newsletters will inform students and the college community about the college's commitment to child safety, and strategies or initiatives that the college is taking to ensure student safety.

The college will use its health and wellbeing programs to deliver appropriate education to its students about:

- standards of behaviour for students attending the college;
- healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality);
- resilience; and
- child abuse awareness and prevention.

Confidentiality and privacy

This college collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law. The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the [School Privacy Policy](#).

Policy evaluation and review

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed every 2 years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the college community.

The policy and planning committee is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy every 2 years.

Related policies and documents

Related policies and documents include:

[Child Safe Code of Conduct](#)

[Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures](#)

Risk assessment register

[Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)

[Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)

[Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools](#)

[Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)

[Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)

[School Policy and Advisory Guide – Duty of Care](#)

[School Policy and Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations](#)