



HIGHVIEW COLLEGE
GENERAL CHILD SAFE POLICY
Person Responsible – Director of Pastoral Care
(Reviewed Annually)

Statement of Context and Purpose

Highview College is committed to child safety.

We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.

We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures, in accordance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Principles. Our work systems, practices, policies and procedures are designed to ensure compliance and to develop a child safe culture.

We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow closely.

Highview College is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks. We have robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers. Highview College is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

Application

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation. We involve them, where possible, when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say. We promote diversity and tolerance at Highview College, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation. All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by this Policy, which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, where possible, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Code of Conduct.

Staff should familiarise themselves with the Overview of the Victorian Child Safe Standards, a copy of which can be found on the Highview website under the Employment tab. Follow the link below:

<http://www.highview.vic.edu.au/index.php/about-highview/employment>

Definitions and key risk indicators (see Appendix A)

Responsibilities

Child protection is everyone's responsibility. At Highview College all members of the School Board, staff and volunteers have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. All employees must agree to abide by the Staff Code of Conduct.

Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone at Highview College understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our 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; 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.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our organisation'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 (please refer to the Highview College Code of Conduct and Child Safe Code of Conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child

safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

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

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

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

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, 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 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.

Legislative responsibilities

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, 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. **Note:** A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse

for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed.

- **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. **Note:** The child safe standards aim to protect children from abuse in organisations, including physical violence, sexual offences, serious emotional or psychological abuse and serious neglect
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

Risk management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

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 (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments.

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed annually and following significant incidents, if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Our organisation takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)

- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed¹
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Implications for practice

The Principal

The Principal is ultimately responsible, and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that the school's Student Safety Policy is implemented effectively.

Child Protection Officer

This Director of Pastoral Care is the Child Safety Officer. This person is the first point of contact for staff or other members of the school community raising child protection issues within the school.

Other major responsibilities include managing the school's response to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse and ensuring that the Student Safety Policy is clearly communicated to all key stakeholders.

Staff

All staff are required to be familiar with this Policy and their legal obligations with respect to reporting child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with the Child Protection Officer and/or with external agencies where required.

Volunteers

All volunteers are required to be familiar with this Policy. They must also be aware that they too have legal obligations with respect of the reporting of child abuse.

Policy developed by Marion Martin – 2016
Policy updated by Marion Martin – 2018
Due for Review – March 2019



APPENDIX A - DEFINITIONS AND KEY RISK INDICATORS

Definitions

Child abuse

Child abuse is defined in Section 3 of the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) as including:

- any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or a grooming offence listed in the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
- the infliction of physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- the serious neglect of a child

A child is defined by the Act as a person who is under the age of 18 years.

Family violence

Whilst the term 'family violence' is not included in the official definition of child abuse, the impact of family violence on a child is commonly referred to as a form of child abuse. Behaviour that causes a child to hear, witness, or be exposed to the effects of such behaviour also falls within the definition of family violence.

Sexual offences

A sexual offence occurs when a person involves a child in sexual activity, or deliberately puts the child in the presence of sexual behaviours that are exploitative or inappropriate to the child's age and development. Children may be bribed or threatened physically to make them participate in the activity.

Sexual abuse can involve a wide range of sexual activity and may include fondling, masturbation, oral sex, penetration, voyeurism and exhibitionism. It can also include exploitation through pornography or prostitution as well as grooming behaviour.

Possible physical indicators of sexual abuse:

- injury to the genital or rectal area, such as bruising or bleeding
- vaginal or anal bleeding or discharge
- discomfort in urinating or defecating
- presence of foreign bodies in vagina and/or rectum
- inflammation or infection of genital area
- sexually transmitted diseases
- pregnancy, especially in very young adolescents
- bruising and other injury to breasts, buttocks or thighs
- anxiety related illnesses such as anorexia or bulimia
- frequent urinary tract infections

Possible behavioural indicators of sexual abuse:

- the student discloses sexual abuse
- persistent and age inappropriate sexual activity
- drawings or descriptions in stories that are sexually explicit and not age appropriate
- a fear of home, a specific place, a particular adult, or excessive fear of men or women

- poor or deteriorating relationships with adults and peers
- poor self-care/personal hygiene
- regularly arriving early at school and leaving late
- complaining of headaches, stomach pains or nausea without physiological basis
- frequent rocking, sucking or biting
- sleeping difficulties
- reluctance to participate in physical or recreational activities
- regressive behaviour, such as bedwetting or speech loss
- sudden accumulation of money or gifts
- unplanned absences or running away from home
- delinquent or aggressive behaviour
- depression
- self-injurious behaviour
- sudden decline in academic performance, poor memory and concentration
- wearing of provocative clothing, or layers of clothes to hide injuries
- promiscuity

Grooming

Grooming refers to predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time. Grooming behaviour typically involves a graduation from attention giving and non-sexual touching to increasingly more intimate and intrusive behaviour. Grooming does not necessarily involve any sexual activity or even discussion of sexual activity. For example, it may only involve establishing a relationship with a child, a parent or carer for the purpose of facilitating sexual activity at a later time.

Certain behaviours or acts will not in isolation constitute grooming behaviour. However, where there is repeating pattern of indicative behaviour, or several incidents of indicative behaviour, it may constitute grooming.

Indicators of grooming behaviours:

- persuading a child or group of children that they have a special relationship
- asking a child to keep the relationship to themselves
- inappropriately allowing a child to overstep the rules
- testing boundaries, for example by undressing in front of a child
- manoeuvring to get or insisting on uninterrupted time alone with a student
- buying a student gifts
- insisting on physical affection such as hugging, wrestling or tickling even when the student clearly does not want it
- being overly interested in the sexual development of a student
- taking a lot of photos of a student
- engaging in inappropriate or excessive physical contact with a student
- sharing alcohol or drugs with a student
- making inappropriate comments about a student's appearance or excessive flattery

- using inappropriate pet names
- making jokes or innuendo of a sexual nature
- making obscene gestures or using obscene language
- sending correspondence of a personal nature via any medium
- inviting, allowing or encouraging students to attend a staff member's home without parent/carer permission
- entering change rooms or toilets occupied by students when supervision is not required or inappropriate
- communicating with a child's parent/step parent, legal guardian, teacher or spiritual leader with the intention of facilitating the child's involvement in sexual conduct
- inappropriately extending a relationship outside of work
- photographing, audio recording or filming students without authorisation or having parental consent to do so

What is not grooming?

Not all physical contact between a student and a staff member or any person engaged by the school to provide services to children, including a volunteer, will be inappropriate and/or an indicator of possible grooming behaviour.

For example:

- administration of first aid
- supporting students who have hurt themselves
- non-intrusive gestures to comfort a student who is experiencing grief, loss or distress
- congratulating by shaking hands or a pat on the back.

Physical violence

Physical violence occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from a non-accidental injury or injuries inflicted by another person. Physical violence can include beating, shaking, burning or using belts and paddles. Physical abuse does not mean reasonable discipline, though it may result from excessive or inappropriate discipline.

Possible physical indicators of physical violence:

- unexplained bruises
- burns that show the shape of the object used to make them
- fractures of the skull, jaw, nose or limbs, especially those not consistent with the explanation offered or the type of injury possible
- cuts and grazes to the mouth, lips, gums, eye area, ears or external genitalia
- human bite marks
- bald patches where hair has been pulled out
- multiple injuries, old and new

Possible behavioural indicators of physical violence:

- inconsistent or unlikely explanation for an injury
- inability to remember the cause of an injury
- fear of specific people

- wearing clothes unsuitable for weather conditions (such as long sleeved tops) to hide injuries
- wariness or fear of a parent/carer and reluctance to go home
- no reaction or little emotion displayed when hurt
- little or no fear when threatened
- habitual absences from school without explanations (the parent/carer may be keeping the child away until signs of injury have disappeared)
- overly compliant, shy, withdrawn, passive and incommunicative
- fearfulness when other children cry or shout
- unusually nervous or hyperactive, disruptive and destructive to self and/or others
- excessively friendly with strangers
- regressive behaviour such as bed wetting or soiling
- poor sleeping patterns, fear of dark, nightmares
- sadness and frequent crying
- drug or alcohol misuse
- poor memory and concentration
- suicide attempts
- academic problems

Serious emotional or psychological harm

Serious emotional or psychological abuse may occur when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats or by witnessing family violence. It also includes hostility, derogatory name-calling and put-downs, or persistent coldness from a person, to the extent where the behaviour of the child is disturbed or their emotional development is at serious risk of being impaired. Serious emotional or psychological harm could also result from conduct such as encouraging a child to engage in inappropriate or risky behaviours.

Psychological or emotional abuse may occur with or without other forms of abuse.

Possible physical indicators of serious emotional or psychological abuse:

- speech disorders
- delays in emotional, mental or even physical development
- physical signs of self-harming

Possible behavioural indicators of serious emotional or psychological harm:

- exhibiting low self-esteem
- exhibiting high anxiety
- overly compliant, passive or undemanding behaviour
- extremely demanding, aggressive or attention-seeking behaviour
- anti-social, destructive behaviour
- low tolerance or frustration
- unexplained mood swings
- self-harming

- behaviours that are not age appropriate, for example overly adult (parenting of other children) or overly infantile (thumb sucking, rocking, wetting or soiling)
- fear of failure, depression, or suicidal thoughts
- running away
- violent drawings or writing
- overly high standards and excessive neatness
- contact with other students forbidden

Serious neglect

Serious neglect is the continued failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter hygiene, medical attention or adequate supervision , to the extent that the child's health, safety and/or development is , or is likely to be, jeopardised. Serious neglect can also occur is an adult fails to adequately ensure the safety of a child where the child is exposed to extremely dangerous or life threatening situations.

Possible physical indicators of serious neglect:

- consistently dirty and unwashed
- consistently inappropriately dressed for weather conditions
- consistently without adequate supervision and at risk of injury or harm
- consistently hungry, tired and listless, falling asleep in class or malnourished
- unattended health problems and lack of routine medical care
- inadequate shelter and unsafe or unsanitary conditions
- abandonment by parents
- poor hygiene

Possible behavioural indicators of serious neglect:

- begging or stealing food
- gorging when food is available
- inability to eat when extremely hungry
- alienated from peers, withdrawn, listless, pale and thin
- aggressive behaviour
- delinquent acts, for example vandalism, drug or alcohol abuse
- little positive interaction with parent/carer
- appearing miserable or irritable
- poor socialising habits
- poor evidence of bonding or little stranger anxiety
- indiscriminate with affection
- poor, irregular or non-attendance at school
- staying at school long hours
- self-destructive
- dropping out of school
- taking on an adult role of caring for a parent
- misusing alcohol or drugs

- academic issues

APPENDIX B - INCIDENT REPORT

This form is to be used to record a disclosure of suspected child abuse. It may be completed by a child or their family if they disclose an allegation of abuse or safety concern. It may also be completed by a staff member to record disclosures.

All incident reports must be stored securely.

INCIDENT DETAILS

| | |
|--|--|
| Date of incident | |
| Time of incident | |
| Location of incident | |
| Name(s) of child/children involved | |
| Name(s) of staff/volunteer involved | |

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

DOES THE CHILD IDENTIFY AS ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER?

(Mark with an 'X' as applicable)

No Yes, Aboriginal Yes, Torres Strait Islander

PLEASE CATEGORISE THE INCIDENT

Physical violence
Sexual offence
Serious emotional or psychological abuse
Serious neglect

| |
|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |

PLEASE DESCRIBE THE INCIDENT

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| When did it take place? | |
| Who was involved? | |
| What did you see? | |
| Other information | |

PARENT/CARER/CHILD USE

| | |
|---|--|
| Date of incident: | |
| Time of incident: | |
| Location of incident: | |
| Name(s) of child/children involved: | |
| Name(s) of staff/volunteer involved: | |

OFFICE USE

| | |
|--|--|
| Date incident report received: | |
| Staff member managing incident: | |
| Follow-up date: | |
| Incident ref. number: | |

HAS THE INCIDENT BEEN REPORTED?

| | |
|---|--|
| Child protection | |
| Police | |
| Another third party (please specify) | |