



CHILD SAFE POLICY

Approved by School Council August 2019

RATIONALE

Developing a Child Safe policy influences the school's culture by providing principles and procedures aimed at protecting children from abuse. A public policy developed with the school community helps raise awareness of child safety in the school and in the community.

Details of the Child Safe Standards are laid out in Ministerial Order No. 870.

Standard 2 requires the school community to work collaboratively to produce a policy that provides an overview of key elements of a school's approach to creating a child-safe organisation. A Child Safe policy influences the organisational culture through an overarching set of principles that guide the development of other school policies, codes and procedures. It should set out the actions the school proposes to take related to child safety and be under a constant state of review in response to emerging evidence and practice.

GUIDELINES

Our commitment to child safety:

- Bentleigh Secondary College is committed to child safety.
- We want children to be safe, happy and empowered.
- 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.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- Bentleigh Secondary College is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- Bentleigh Secondary College has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- Bentleigh Secondary 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 culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability and children who are vulnerable.
- We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

If you believe a child is at risk of abuse, take immediate action following mandatory reporting procedures.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our policies, processes and practices will at all times comply with the principles and legal requirements as outlined by Ministerial Order No. 870. The following policies and documents reflect this:

- Acceptable use and e-safety
- Anaphylaxis
- Attendance
- Bullying Prevention
- Camps and Excursions
- Distribution of medications
- Emergency management
- Equal opportunity and Anti-harassment
- First aid and Care arrangements for ill students
- Homestay
- House system
- International Student Program
- Mandatory reporting
- Parent Communication
- Professional Development
- Raising Concerns and Complaints
- School philosophy
- Staff handbook
- Student Code of Conduct
- Student Engagement Guidelines
- Suitability for employment
- Supervision and Duty of care
- Sunsmart
- Uniform
- Visitors to the College
- Working with Children Check



Our children:

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants at Bentleigh Secondary College. We involve them 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 in our organisation, 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
- promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children from sexual and gender diverse background
- support children who are vulnerable.

Our staff and volunteers:

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 our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

Training and supervision:

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

Our organisational 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 or who identify as sexually diverse or gender diverse.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand Bentleigh Secondary College'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 Bentleigh Secondary College's 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. Bentleigh Secondary College 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 teachers are required to hold Victorian Institute of Teaching registration. All other people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. Please see the [Working with Children Check](#) website for further information.

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:

Bentleigh Secondary College 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.¹

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.²

Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.³

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 (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media, unless school approved).

Allegations, concerns and complaints:

Bentleigh Secondary College 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)
- a behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed⁴
- a suspicion raised by someone else has of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour

Regular review:

This policy will be reviewed yearly 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, people with a disability and those who identify as sexually or gender diverse.

All personnel of Bentleigh Secondary College are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:

- adhering to the child safe policy at all times and upholding Bentleigh Secondary College's statement of commitment to child safety at all times as outlined in the Child Safe policy
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating everyone with respect
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal child's self-identification)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination)
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities)
- supporting children who are vulnerable
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child in a confined, isolated or unobservable space
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to the Wellbeing team/Principal Class, and ensure any allegation is reported to the police or Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) – Child Protection
- reporting any child safety concerns to the Wellbeing team/Principal Class
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe

¹ 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.

Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](#)

² Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](#)

³ Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about [how to make a report to child protection](#)

⁴ For example behaviour, please see [An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards](#)



- encouraging children to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them

Staff and volunteers must not:

- develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps)
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)
- do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities)
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, sexuality, gender, ethnicity or disability
- have organised contact with a child outside of our organisation without our Principal's knowledge and/or consent (for example, babysitting). Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate
- have any online contact with a child that is unrelated to their professional duties
- use any personal contact details such as phone number, social networking sites or private email addresses (unless under exceptional circumstances with the permission of the Principal)
- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse

By observing these standards you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to a member of the Principal Class.

If you believe a child is at risk of abuse, take immediate action following mandatory reporting procedures.

EVALUATION

Review annually, by Policy and Accountability Committee with recommendations to College Council