



Bentleigh Secondary College

Bentleigh Secondary College's Commitment to Child Safety

Bentleigh Secondary College is committed to child safety for all students. We want children to be and feel safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all students, staff and volunteers. We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children and young people. 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. Our school has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers. We are committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks. 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 immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Our Students

This policy is intended to empower students who are vital and active participants in our school. 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 school, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome.

In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that students with a disability are safe and can participate equally
- support children who are vulnerable
- promote the acceptance of same sex families

Our Staff and Volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with students in our school. 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 students. 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 are important to ensure that everyone in our school understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility. Our school culture aims for all staff, volunteers, parents/carers and students 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
- promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children
- the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds
- the safety of vulnerable children and
- the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well



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as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (refer to the Bentleigh Secondary College 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 school understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

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 to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. 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.

See the Working with Children Check website (www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) for further information.

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 document all allegations of abuse and safety concerns and the actions taken.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or students, 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 school 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.
- Failure to protect: A person of authority with knowledge of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse in our school will commit a criminal offence if they have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so. 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. At Bentleigh Secondary College, we request that staff inform a member of the Wellbeing Team or a member of the Principal Class about child safe concerns. If needed a report will then be made by a member of the Wellbeing Team or Principal Class.
- Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties. Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, psychologists, 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.



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Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website

< <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-disclose-offence>>

Risk management

In Victoria, schools 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 on social media).

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Our school 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).

See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about how to make a report to child protection <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/making-report-child-protection>

Related Policies:

Child safe policy

Child Safe Code of Conduct

Child Safe Reporting Obligations

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	June 2023
Approved by	School council
Next scheduled review date	June 2024