

INTRODUCTION

All staff members of Bairnsdale Secondary College are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children. Our College values provide the framework under which our policies and guidelines are developed:

- Students are the focus
- Being the best we can be
- Respect self, each other and the environment
- Honour and celebrate diversity
- Working together.

AIM

Bairnsdale Secondary College provides a safe environment for all children and fully complies with Ministerial Order 870. This Policy sets out the College's approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people feel safe, are safe and provides the framework for the College's approach to the DET Child Safe Standards.

SCOPE

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

The policy applies across the full range of school forums and activities, inside and outside of school hours.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Bairnsdale Secondary College is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This is the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

Bairnsdale Secondary College has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Bairnsdale Secondary College is 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 is paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

Every person involved in Bairnsdale Secondary College has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays 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.

POLICY

This policy relates to all College employees, contractors and volunteers, whether or not they work in direct contact with children. The policy applies across all College environments, during school and outside of school hours, within and outside the physical College environment and the online environment. The policy is communicated to the whole school community including all staff, students and families and is also available to the general public on the College website.

The College commits to taking a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety by:

- valuing and empowering children to participate in decisions which affect their lives
- fostering a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children
- respecting diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount
- providing written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children
- engaging only the most suitable people to work with children and having high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development
- ensuring 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
- reporting suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities
- sharing information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk
- valuing the input of and communicating regularly with families and carers
- having robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers
- providing regular training and education of College staff and volunteers on child abuse risks
- having a suite of policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

IMPLEMENTATION

A child-safe culture

The College's culture encourages staff and all community members to identify, raise, discuss and examine concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur or remain hidden. The College's approach to providing an environment supporting child safety and to ensuring adherence with the Child Safe policy and procedure is primarily lead by the Leadership Team and the College Wellbeing Team.

College staff members understand their roles and responsibilities & Code of Conduct

College leadership 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 Child Safety Code of Conduct.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Human resources practises and training

The 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. We will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our

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commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. All prospective staff and volunteers are required to maintain valid Victorian Institute of Teaching registration or Working with Children Check.

The College's approach to human resources practices that ensure child safety are in accordance with DET policy and guidelines.

Responding to & reporting a child safety concern

The College has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. Immediate action should include reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection or another appropriate agency and notifying the Principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns. The school will take action to respond to a complaint.

The Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations policy and procedures for reporting a child safety concern or complaint can be found on the Compass portal and the College website at <http://bairnsdalesc.vic.edu.au/policies-and-procedures.html>

Risk reduction and management

The College believes the wellbeing of children is paramount and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes. The College acknowledges that there are potential risks to children and young people and we take a risk management approach by adopting preventative measures to limit these risks. The Principal Team undertakes an annual Risk Assessment Checklist to guide decision making and activities related to minimising risk for children at the College (Appendix 4).

Listening to 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.

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

Confidentiality and Privacy

The 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 DET School Privacy Policy

OTHER RESOURCES / CONTACT NUMBERS

- Police 000
- Bairnsdale Police Station 5150 2600
- DHHS Child Protection 1300 655 795 (outside office hours: 13 12 78)
- Child First 5152 0013
- Bairnsdale Secondary College Wellbeing Team

DEFINITIONS

Please refer to Appendix 5.

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RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

BSC:

- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Acceptable Use for Internet, Social Media & Digital Technologies Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Duty of Care Policy

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

- Child Wellbeing and Safety Framework
- School Staff Selection, Supervision and Management Practices for a Child Safe Environment
- The PROTECT Portal
- Schools' Privacy policy

OTHER RESOURCES: Ministerial Order 870

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Child Safe Standard 1: Key activities of the College Wellbeing Coordinator

PROVIDE AUTHORITATIVE ADVICE

- Act as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of child safety.
- Liaise with the Principal and school leaders to maintain the visibility of child safety.
- Lead the development of the school's child safety culture, including being a child safety champion and providing coordination in communicating, implementing, monitoring, enhancing and reporting on strategies to embed a culture of child safety.

RAISE AWARENESS

- Ensure the school's policies are known and used appropriately.
- Ensure the school's child safety policy is reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework.
- Ensure the child safety policy is available publicly and parents are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school in this.
- Be alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers.
- Among all staff encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings in any measures to protect them.

TRAIN OTHER STAFF and MAINTAIN OWN TRAINING

- Being authoritative in providing advice by:
 - keeping their skills up to date with appropriate training carried out every two years
 - having a working knowledge of how the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Community Service Organisations conduct a child protection case conference, to be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so.
- Ensure each member of staff has access to and understands the school's child safety policy and procedures, especially new and part time staff and volunteers.
- Make sure staff members are aware of training opportunities and the latest DHHS and DET policies and guidance.
- Be able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals.

APPENDIX 2: STAFF RESPONSE & REPORTING GUIDELINES

If a child discloses an incident of abuse to you:

- try and separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully
- let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred
- reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing
- explain to them that this information may need to be shared others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people in your organisation, or the police
- do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe
- do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them
- provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together, if you think the child is able to do this
- as soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to a College Principal, police or child protection
- ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

If a parent/carer says their child has been abused in your organisation or raises a concern:

- explain that your organisation has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously
- ask about the wellbeing of the child
- allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words
- advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details
- explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the organisation's management or Child Safety Officer, the police or child protection
- do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe
- provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together
- ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the next steps will be
- ensure the report is recorded accurately and stored securely.

Be aware that some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers in reporting allegations of abuse. For example, people from some cultures may experience anxiety when talking with police, and communicating in English may be a barrier for some. Be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible, such as having an interpreter present (who could be a friend or family member).

If an allegation of abuse involves an Aboriginal child, you will need to ensure a culturally appropriate response. A way to help ensure this could include engaging with parents of Aboriginal children, local Aboriginal communities or an Aboriginal community controlled organisations to review policies and procedures.

Some children with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident. For example, children with hearing or cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident, including through sign language interpreters.

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

PRINCIPAL'S CHECKLIST: Fulfilling your role when an incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse comes to your attention

If there is an incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse concerning a student or staff member at your school, as a Principal, you are responsible for:

Reporting and recording

- Ensuring that the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse have been followed
- Ensuring that your staff complete the Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: Template for all Victorian Schools
- Undertaking the review process included within the template between 4-6 weeks after a report is made.

On-going communication

Ongoing liaison/communication with:

- DHHS Child Protection and Victoria Police
- Regional Office and SIRU if engaged
- Parents/carers of all impacted students (where appropriate, following advice from authorities)

If an international student is impacted:

- Liaison with International Education Division (Government schools)

If an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Student is impacted:

- Liaison with Koorie Education Officer

If a staff member is implicated:

- Liaison with Victoria Police
- Ongoing communication and action as set out by the Employee Conduct Branch

Providing on-going support

Overseeing the development of a short-term action plan for all children impacted by suspected abuse in consultation with:

- The Region and the Student Incident and Recovery Unit

Ensuring ongoing education and support services are provided for all children involved via:

- Formation of a Student Support Group
- Developing, implementing and reviewing a *Student Support Plan* in partnership with children and their parents/carers, allied health workers and external support agencies where appropriate (this plan should list appropriate school-level and non-school based supports and should assist students in returning to school)
- Addressing concerns as they arise

Provision of school based wellbeing services

- Continued monitoring of the situation and the health and wellbeing of impacted children and staff members
- Ensuring the provision of ongoing support for the children, families and staff members involved.

APPENDIX 4: PROTECT



Child Safe Standard 6: Risk Assessment checklist

Risk Event or Environment	Existing strategies / controls	Likelihood	Consequence	Current risk rating	New risk management strategies or treatments	Who is responsible?	Target risk rating
	Describe current strategies / activities / controls	Likely, possible, unlikely	Low, moderate, severe, major	Low, medium, high, extreme	Describe proposed strategies / activities / controls to improve this rating if required	Principal, Welfare Coordinator, etc.	
Check current organisational culture of child safety							Low
Inappropriate behaviour is reported and addressed							Low
Unquestioning trust of long term employees and contractors or norms							Low
Recruitment of an inappropriate person							Low
Engagement with children online							Low
Unknown people and environments at excursions and camps							Low
Ad-hoc contractors on the premises (e.g. maintenance)							Low

APPENDIX 5: Definitions (including those sourced from Ministerial Order 870).

ETR Act: means the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 as amended from time to time.

Child: means a child enrolled as a student at the school.

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

Child abuse: includes:

- (a) any act committed against a child involving –
 - (i) a sexual offence; or
 - (ii) an offence under section 49B(2) of the **Crimes Act 1958** (grooming); and
- (b) the infliction, on a child, of –
 - (i) physical violence; or
 - (ii) serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- (c) serious neglect of a child.

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.

DET: Department of Education and Training

DHHS: Department of Health and Human Services

Proprietor: in relation to a government school the Secretary, who is ultimately responsible for the way the school is managed and conducted:

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

School governing authority means:

- (a) the proprietor of a school, including a person authorised to act for or on behalf of the proprietor; or
- (b) the governing body for a school (school council), as authorised by the proprietor of a school or the ETR Act; or
- (c) the Principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school, the school governing body, or the ETR Act.

School staff means:

- (a) in a Government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:
 - (i) employed under Part 2.4 of the ETR Act in the government teaching service; or
 - (ii) employed under a contract of service by the council of the school under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act; or
 - (iii) a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary).