

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 feel safe, are safe and provides the framework for the College's approach to the DET Child Safe Standards.

POLICY

The College is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children. We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. This is the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

Bairnsdale Secondary College has zero tolerance of child abuse and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our policies and procedures. We have legal and moral obligations to contact relevant authorities when we are concerned about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

Every person involved in the 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 is at the forefront of all activities and decisions.

Particular attention is paid to the cultural safety of indigenous children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability.

This policy relates to all College employees, contractors, agency staff and volunteers, whether or not they work in direct contact with children. This Policy applies across all College environments, during school and outside of school hours, within and outside the physical College environment and the online

environment. This Policy affects and 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 our 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.

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

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 Protocols includes effective leadership arrangements primarily by the Principal Team and the College Wellbeing Team.

The College Wellbeing Coordinator is a leader for school for child safety. They have the ability, authority and support of the Principal Team to provide advice, raise awareness and train other staff in the College. Refer to Appendix 1 for a list of responsibilities for the College Wellbeing Coordinator.

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

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our care. In addition to this policy the College has a Child Safe Code of Conduct which outlines the clear expectation for appropriate behaviour when working with children. These standards apply in addition to other professional codes such as the VIT Code of Conduct and the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees.

The College Child Safe Policy, Duty of Care Policy and the Child Safe Code of Conduct is available on the College website, Sharepoint and incorporated in induction packages for all College staff, contractors. The College maintains a record of all staff members who have read and signed the Child Safety Code of Conduct.

The Child Safe Code of Conduct is also made available to the families of students in enrolment packages to inform them of the behaviour they can expect from the College's leadership, staff and volunteers. The Child Safe Code of Conduct contributes to the College's protocols and reporting procedures should breaches of the Code be suspected or identified.

This policy and related documents are communicated to all staff members as part of the Annual Child Safe Presentation, with staff attendance records kept.

Human resources practises and training

Robust recruitment processes utilised by the College and the DET help ensure the best applicants are employed including during advertising, conducting interviews and checking the background of applicants. The College follows guidelines in the following areas to ensure the most suitable employees and volunteers are employed:

- selection criteria
- job advertising
- interviews
- screening and professional reference checks
- a range of other checks including Working with Children, Police (criminal records) and identity checks

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

We require VIT or Working With Children Checks from all successful applicants. We carry out identity, reference and police record checks as required 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 is given the opportunity to provide further information and context prior to a final decision.

Responding to & reporting a child safety concern

Every adult who reasonably believes that a child has been abused has an obligation to report that belief to authorities (whether in their organisation or not). The failure to disclose criminal offence requires all adults (aged 18 and over) who hold a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 to disclose that information to police (unless they have a reasonable excuse not to, for example because they fear for their safety or the safety of another). While failure to disclose only covers child sexual abuse, all adults should report other forms of child abuse to a Principal Team member first then to appropriate authorities if required. Failure to disclose does not change mandatory reporting responsibilities.

College staff members can use the guidelines in Appendix 2 when responding to and reporting an incident of child abuse.

| | | |
|--|--|--------------|
| Bairnsdale Secondary College Policy Name: Child Safety Reviewer: Assistant Principal | Ratified by Council: October 2016 Review Schedule: every 2 years Date of last review: October 2016 | Page 3 of 10 |
|--|--|--------------|

The Principal has primary responsibility within the College for managing our response to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse. MO870 requires that the school leadership team support and empower staff to make a report if necessary, including education about how to spot warning signs of abuse.

The College Principal is responsible for the activities outlined in Appendix 3 when identifying and responding to all forms of Child Abuse.

All staff members are provided with the following DET resources which provide guidance and information about reporting a child safety concern or complaint:

- PROTECT: Spotting the Warning Signs of Child Abuse
- PROTECT: Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools
- PROTECT: Four Critical Actions for Schools

Staff in the College 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 (failure to protect).

Refer to the College's policies on Duty of Care, Bullying Prevention and Mandatory Reporting for more details on how the College responds to a child safety concern or complaint.

Risk reduction and management

The College believes the wellbeing of children is paramount and we are vigilant in ensuring comprehensive risk management processes. The College acknowledges that there are potential risks to children 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 (see Appendix 4).

Listening to children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation. The College involves children when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to children's views and respect what they have to say. We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation. 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.

Please refer to the College Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy which provides detail about empowering children.

Confidentiality and Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded by the College respects 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 personal information is protected. Everyone

| | | |
|--|--|--------------|
| Bairnsdale Secondary College Policy Name: Child Safety Reviewer: Assistant Principal | Ratified by Council: October 2016 Review Schedule: every 2 years Date of last review: October 2016 | Page 4 of 10 |
|--|--|--------------|

is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it and who will have access to it.

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.

RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

BAIRNSDALE SECONDARY COLLEGE:

- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Duty of Care Policy
- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Student Management Policy
- Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy
- Mobile Devices Policy
- Smoking & Drugs and Alcohol Policies

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

- Child Wellbeing and Safety Framework
- School Staff Selection, Supervision and Management Practices for a Child Safe Environment
- PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Child Abuse in Victorian Schools: Principal Checklist
- PROTECT: Spotting the Warning Signs of Child Abuse: for All School Staff
- PROTECT: Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools (given to every staff member at the College)
- PROTECT: Four Critical Actions for Schools (given to every staff member at the College)

OTHER RESOURCES:

- School Policy & Advisory Guide – Duty of Care
- School Policy & Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations
- Ministerial Order 870

| | | |
|--|--|--------------|
| Bairnsdale Secondary College Policy Name: Child Safety Reviewer: Assistant Principal | Ratified by Council: October 2016 Review Schedule: every 2 years Date of last review: October 2016 | Page 5 of 10 |
|--|--|--------------|

APPENDICES

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:
 - o keeping their skills up to date with appropriate training carried out every two years
 - o 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 that the record is 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.

| | | |
|--|--|--------------|
| Bairnsdale Secondary College Policy Name: Child Safety Reviewer: Assistant Principal | Ratified by Council: October 2016 Review Schedule: every 2 years Date of last review: October 2016 | Page 7 of 10 |
|--|--|--------------|

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



Education and Training

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).

| | | |
|--|--|---------------|
| Bairnsdale Secondary College Policy Name: Child Safety Reviewer: Assistant Principal | Ratified by Council: October 2016 Review Schedule: every 2 years Date of last review: October 2016 | Page 10 of 10 |
|--|--|---------------|