

## Policy Statement

*Child safety encompasses all matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of abuse, and responding to allegations of child abuse. (VRQA Child Safe Standards 2016).*

Wantirna College is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This is the primary focus of our care and decision-making. We have zero tolerance for child abuse and will always rigorously pursue our moral and legal obligations to contact authorities where we are worried about a child safety. Our commitment is to provide an environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.

We consciously work to build an inclusive community that ensures equity for all our students. This includes **the diversity of all children, including the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities and vulnerable children**. This inclusivity promotes a culture of trust and respect that allows students to feel safe and protected.

Child abuse is defined as:

- a) Any act committed against a child involving-
  - I. A sexual offence; or
  - II. An offence under section 49B (2) of the Crimes Act 158 (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.

As a community, the staff and volunteers who work at the College provide a safe environment for children with an emphasis on preventing child abuse by identifying risks early and removing or reducing these risks. We have a series of robust recruitment and management practices for all staff and volunteers in addition to regular training and education for them in relation to issues of child safety. A code of conduct guides all interactions between students and staff with an emphasis on ensuring the student is well protected in their interactions and any disclosure.

This policy applies to all school staff including those who are:

- Employed under part 2.4 of the Education Training Reform Act in the government teaching service: or
- Employed under a contract of service by the College Council under part 2.3 of the Education Training Reform Act or a volunteer or contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)

This policy supports a suite of other policies that ensure the safety and well-being of our students including:

- The Student Wellbeing and Pastoral Care Policy
- The Mandatory Reporting Policy
- The Student Engagement Policy

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We are invested in creating a school environment where our students are respected and empowered in terms of their safety. The school environment is not limited to the College campus; it includes all venues where school events take place (excursion, event, sport and camp venues) and virtual environments such as the College intranet and email.

## Guidelines

- I.1 Wantirna College promotes a culture where the safety of children is paramount.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- I.2 All staff and volunteers have a duty of care to students in relation to child safety and will make the appropriate reports to at

## Program

- 2.1 All staff are encouraged to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns regarding a child's safety to make it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.
  - 2.1.1 The College's plan for creating a child safe culture can be found on the College website and on Compass.
  
- 2.2 All VIT registered teachers, registered medical practitioners, nurses and members of the police force are **mandated** to report to DHHS (Child Protection) if in the course of carrying out their duties, they form a reasonable belief that a child or young person in need of protection as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse and the child's parents are unable and/or unwilling to protect the child from that abuse.  
All adults, not just professionals who work with children, have a legal obligation to report to Victoria Police where they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16. **Failure to disclose** the information may amount to a criminal offence.  
Any member of the Principal team (substantive or active) who becomes aware that an adult involved with Wantirna College poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under our care, authority or supervision must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk. Not taking reasonable steps in these circumstances is known as **Failure to Protect** and is a criminal offence.
  - 2.2.1 The Wantirna College Mandatory Reporting Policy applies to all staff and volunteers at Wantirna College. All staff and volunteers need to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities under this policy.
  - 2.2.2 Staff members or volunteers who receive information about child abuse must take immediate action to report that information directly to the Leader of Student Wellbeing or a member of the Principal team. If the report implicates a staff member it must be reported directly to the Principal.
  - 2.2.3 The Leader of Student Wellbeing or member of the Principal team will take immediate action to report the matter to the appropriate authority e.g. Department of Education and Training, Victoria

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Police, SOCIT (Sexual Offences and Crime Investigation Team), Department of Human Services, Child Protection, Child First).

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| 1.3 | The College is a safe, supportive and inclusive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/carers. | 2.2.4 | Where the report of child abuse implicates a staff member or volunteer the report should be made directly, and with urgency, to the Principal. If the Principal is unavailable, the report should be directly made to an Assistant Principal. In this case the staff member or volunteer will be removed from all duties involving the supervision of a child pending advice from the Department of Education and Training Conduct and Ethics Unit. |
|     |  | 2.2.5 | Members of the staff who have to make a report will be offered support during and after the process.  |
|     |  | 2.2.6 | The Principal should be briefed when a staff member makes a mandated report.  |
|     |  | 2.3   | All reports of misconduct with, or abuse of a child will be taken seriously.  |
|     |  | 2.3.1 | When information the staff member or volunteer receiving the complaint will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Take the complainant seriously</li><li>• Check for understanding</li><li>• Keep the complainant informed about the progress of the complaint.</li></ul>  |
| 1.4 | Where a report has been made the school will take action to ensure the immediate safety of the child.  | 2.4   | The Leader of Student Wellbeing will work with the Wellbeing team and outside providers to develop a safety plan for the student.   |
| 1.5 | All staff will undertake professional learning in relation to issues related to child safety.  | 2.5   | Professional learning related to mandatory reporting and managing student disclosures will be provided for all staff on an annual basis.  |
|     |  | 2.5.1 | Staff who are dealing with students who have made disclosures will receive support from the Student Wellbeing Team to make the necessary mandated report.   |
| 1.6 | A Code of Conduct will clearly articulate the expectations in relation to staff and volunteers interactions with students.                       | 2.6   | All staff and volunteers will be made aware of the Code of Conduct for interaction with students.   |
|     |  | 2.6.1 | The Code of Conduct will be tabled and discussed at a minimum of one staff meeting each year.   |
|     |  | 2.6.2 | A presentation related to child safety and the College Code of Conduct will be included in the induction for new staff members when they join the College.  |
|     |  | 2.6.3 | A copy of the Code of Conduct will be included in the induction booklet for student teachers and volunteers.  |

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- 1.7 It is the duty of all staff and volunteers to ensure the Code of Conduct is followed by all adults in the College.
- 1.8 All members of staff have a duty of care for students in any College environment where they interact with students. This duty of care is not limited to the school day.
- 1.9 The College will actively support the wellbeing of students who are victims of child abuse.
- 1.10 The College will effectively manage known risks to child safety.
- 2.7 If a staff member or volunteer becomes aware of a colleague breaching the Code of Conduct they are obligated to report that breach immediately. Failure to report is considered a serious disciplinary matter.
- 2.7.1 Staff members or volunteers may report breaches to a Leading Teacher, Year Level Leader or member of the Principal team. Where the report is received by a Leading teacher or Year Level Leader it will be forwarded to a member of the Principal team.
- 2.7.2 Breaches of the Code of Conduct will be investigated fully following DET guidelines and where appropriate the Conduct and Ethics Unit.
- 2.7.4 Where a breach is substantiated, it will be treated as a disciplinary matter.
- 2.8 Staff who interact with students in online environments have a duty of care to those students in those online environments.
- 2.8.1 Where a staff member or volunteer becomes aware of child abuse in an online environment they are required to act on that information with a sense of urgency.
- 2.8.2 Each member of staff will have the mobile phone numbers of the principal team. Should they need assistance to report an issue of child abuse outside of school hours they should contact the Principal, or if unavailable an Assistant Principal.
- 2.9 Wellbeing support will be coordinated by the College for students who are subjected to child abuse or who are deemed to be in danger.
- 2.9.1 The Wellbeing team will coordinate support for students and families in the broader community.
- 2.9.2 Where Wellbeing support in the broader community is not taken up by the student or family internal support for the student will be set up.
- 2.9.3 Year Level Leaders and classroom teachers will be provided with enough information about a student's circumstances to provide ongoing monitoring without breaching the student's privacy.
- 2.10 On enrolment, the parent enrolling the child will be required to present copies of any intervention or court orders which will be kept on file.
- 2.10.1 It is the parent's responsibility to provide new copies of intervention or court orders that are changed or updated.

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- 2.10.2 The office will record information about intervention or court orders on CASES. This will be kept up to date.
    - 2.10.3 The General Office and Health Centre staff are required to check CASES for court orders before responding to any enquiries about student attendance at the College.
    - 2.10.3 Staff at the College will only provide information about a child's enrolment or attendance at the College to the custodial parent, the Victorian Police or the Department of Human Services. All care will be taken to ensure the identity of any callers requesting this type of information will be established before any information is provided.
  - 1.11 The College will implement clear risk management strategies in relation to child safety in the recruitment of new staff.
    - 2.11 When recruiting staff or volunteers to the College the importance of child safety will be made clear to all potential candidates.
      - 2.11.1 All employment advertisements will include a reference to the College's commitment to providing a child-safe environment.
      - 2.11.2 All employees, volunteers (including parents) or service providers who work in any College environment as defined by the policy statement will be required to have either a current Working with Children Check, police check or VIT registration.
      - 2.11.3 Issues related to child safety and child abuse will be raised with all staff and/or volunteers as a part of the College induction program.
    - 2.12 The College will ensure all adults who work directly with students in the College environment including volunteers, parents, service providers, incursion/excursion and camp staff will have a current Working with Children Check.
      - 2.12.1 Evidence of Working with Children Checks will be provided in the documented risk assessments for incursions/excursions and camps.
      - 2.12.2 A Wantirna College staff member will be present when staff from incursion/excursion and camp providers are working with our students.
      - 2.12.3 Where an incursion/excursion or camp has an unsupervised element as an educational component of the experience students will always work in pairs or small groups.
  - 1.12 The College will implement clear risk management strategies in relation to child safety when working with *outside providers*.
    - 2.12 The College will ensure all adults who work directly with students in the College environment including volunteers, parents, service providers, incursion/excursion and camp staff will have a current Working with Children Check.
      - 2.12.1 Evidence of Working with Children Checks will be provided in the documented risk assessments for incursions/excursions and camps.
      - 2.12.2 A Wantirna College staff member will be present when staff from incursion/excursion and camp providers are working with our students.
      - 2.12.3 Where an incursion/excursion or camp has an unsupervised element as an educational component of the experience students will always work in pairs or small groups.
  - 1.13 The College will implement a clear risk management strategy in relation to child safety with *existing staff*.
    - 2.13 The Principal will speak directly to all staff at the beginning of the year about child safety and the relationship to the Code of Conduct related to staff/student relationships.
      - 2.13.1 The Principal will ensure there are other opportunities throughout the year to remind staff

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of their obligations in relation to the Code of Conduct for staff/student relationships.

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| I.14 | Staff will be provided with professional learning to assist in recognizing the physical and psychological signs of child abuse. | 2.13.2 | All breaches of the Code of Conduct by staff members whether they relate to child abuse or not will be treated as a disciplinary matter.   |
| I.15 | Child safety is a community responsibility in which parents and students have a clear role.                                     | 2.14   | The Student Wellbeing team will be responsible for providing annual professional learning for staff in relation to recognizing the signs of child abuse and the legal and moral obligations of staff to act.   |
|      |   | 2.14.1 | At least one staff meeting a year will be devoted to professional learning in relation to child abuse.   |
|      |   | 2.15   | The Child Safe Policy will be made available to all members of our community through a range of forums. It will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Distributed with the College newsletter at the beginning of each year, via a link to the website</li><li>• Made available on the Wantirna College website</li><li>• Accessible through the College portal (Compass).</li><li>• Available as a hard document via a request to the General Office.</li></ul> |
|      |   | 2.15.1 | Regular information will be provided by the Student Wellbeing or Sub school teams via the College Newsletter to support, encourage and enable parents to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety issues.   |
|      |   | 2.15.2 | Information for students regarding child safety and what to do if a student is concerned for their own or a friend's safety will be included in the student planner, and will be included in the Mentor Program and other appropriate curriculum e.g. Health.  |

Policy drafted by:  
Policy Ratified by College Council:  
Policy Reviewed by:  
Policy Ratified by College Council:

Catherine Ford in consultation with Sue Bell 2016  
6 September 2016  
Catherine Ford September 2018  
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