

 Plenty Valley <small>CHRISTIAN COLLEGE</small> <small>In Christ: Wisdom & Knowledge</small>		Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment	
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Rationale

Child safe standards require organisations that provide services for children to incorporate a culture of safety in order to protect children from abuse. This is everybody's business and the College is determined to instil a culture of safety for children.

This policy is also intended to empower children to become vital and active participants in their own safety. We seek to involve them in making decisions about matters that directly affect them and to empower them to report concerns about safety. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

This policy guides our governing body, staff and volunteers on how to provide a safe environment for children in the College.

Our Commitment to Child Safety

The College:

- Is committed to the providing a safe environment for all children, including (but not limited to) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable.
- Is committed to children being safe, contented and empowered. We support and respect all members of the College community.
- Has a zero tolerance of child abuse and all allegations concerning matters of safety will be treated very seriously and consistently with our policies and procedures.
- Acknowledges the legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when concerned about a child's safety.
- Is committed to preventing child abuse, identifying the risks to safety and removing or mitigating these risks.
- Has recruitment practices that ensure only appropriate staff and volunteers are engaged to work in the College.
- Is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers about child abuse risks.
- Is committed to providing equal opportunities for all children including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable.
- Has specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.
- Encourages any member of its community to develop an awareness of child safety issues and to feel comfortable in raising such issues with College representatives.
- Has named the College Counsellor/Psychologist as the Child Safety Officer. Any member of the College Executive is delegated to act in his/her absence.

In Victoria, Schools are required to protect children when a risk is identified. In addition to the general protocols covering occupational health and safety risk, we proactively attempt to prevent and minimise the risks of abuse of children.

The College has risk management strategies in place to identify and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments and online environments. It will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management strategies.

The College works to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or notice inappropriate behaviour, or are a victim of abuse themselves.

After any mandatory report has been made by a staff member of PVCC:

- The PVCC Child Safety Officer will ensure that support is made available to the child concerned through counselling and referral to external agencies.
- The PVCC Child Safety Officer will ensure that the staff member making the report has access to support through the PVCC EAP (by reporting to a member of the PVCC Executive that a staff member has made a mandatory report and may be in need of support. The Executive staff member will then organise for the EAP to be made available to the reporting staff member)
- The PVCC Child Safety Office will give statistical information of the report made to the Deputy Principal who will make this information available for the Principal to include in Principal's Report to the Board.

Training and Supervision:

College staff and volunteers must agree to sign and abide by our code of conduct (See Child Safe Code of Conduct) which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. Everyone that enters the college property must abide by our code of conduct.

Our College endeavours to provide a culture where staff, volunteers, parents and children feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our College understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility. We therefore train our staff and volunteers to identify and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

The College supports staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse and promote the safety of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable and make reasonable efforts to accommodate the matters with reference to the principle of inclusion.

Students who turn 18 years of age in a college year must undergo child safe training.

New employees and volunteers will be inducted and supervised to ensure they understand the College commitment to child safety.

The College also provides training to staff so they can confidently report concerns and inappropriate behaviour to the Department of Health and Human Services or Victoria Police.

The safety and wellbeing of children is a primary concern for the College. The decisions made when recruiting, assessing incidents and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent and evidence based.

All allegations of abuse and safety concerns will be recorded using our incident reporting procedures including investigation updates from external agencies and services. All records will be retained and securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised the College will provide up to date reports to families involved and notification of any actions the College intends to take or has taken.

Recruitment:

The College takes all reasonable steps to employ skilled people who demonstrate commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities to work with children. The College will require proof of identity for all employees.

Teaching staff must hold a valid VIT registration and criminal history record check and adhere to VIT standards of practice.

Our College understands that when recruiting any staff it has ethical and legislative obligations. We therefore complete relevant employment checks, contact referees and discuss our child safety protocols at the interview stage of employment processes.

All volunteers and non-teaching staff engaged in child-related work, are required to hold a Working with Children Check (WWCC) and to provide evidence of this Check. Valid and original WWCC's are sighted and copied for College records by those staff issuing approval to non-teaching staff and volunteers.

We carry out reference checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. All checks used for the purposes of recruitment are kept on file. We do retain our own records 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.

College advertisements for employment will reference the College's commitment to a child safe environment.

Privacy:

All personal information collected by the College will respect the privacy of individuals in accordance with our Privacy Policy unless there is a risk to someone's safety. The College has safeguards and practices in place to ensure all personal information is protected. Employees will know how private information is recorded and who will have access to it.

Legislative Responsibilities:

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred **they must report the incident immediately** or else otherwise immediately ensure that another person has reported the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- A child discloses or alleges abuse
- A child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes a child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- Behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- Someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- Direct observation of suspicious behaviour.

The College takes 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 quickly report that information to the police.

Failure to protect: Any person over the age of 18 is deemed to have committed 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.

Regular Review:

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following any significant incident.

College risk controls will be monitored and reviewed following any policy failure.

For additional information, please refer to College Policies on:

- *Child Safe Code of conduct*
- *Child Safe Officer Role*
- *Child Safe Procedure for Disclosure of Abuse or Possible Risk of Harm*

Please Note: The nominated College Child Safety Officer is the College Counsellor/Psychologist. In his/her absence, the authority is delegated to a relevant member of the College Executive (Heads of Sub-School, Deputy Principal or Principal).

DOCUMENT HISTORY & VERSION CONTROL RECORD

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1.4	05/12/2018	Principal	Minor changes, Reviewed and Signed
1.5	14/05/2019	Principal	Updates to wording, reviewed and signed
1.6	28/05/2020	Principal	Minor updates

Approved By:

Date:

28/05/2020

Mr John Metcalfe
Principal