



## Child Protection

### COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Waverley Christian College is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

Waverley Christian College has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Waverley Christian 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 will be 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 Waverley Christian 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.

Consistent with the recommendations provided to the Royal Commission by the *Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians (ACCG)*, Waverley Christian College, in its planning, decision-making and operations will:

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
7. Ensure 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;
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

### RATIONALE

The purpose of this policy is

- To work towards an organisational culture of child safety.
- To facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within Waverley Christian College.
- To ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs.
- To provide guidance to staff/volunteers/contractors as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation.
- To provide a clear statement to staff/volunteers/contractors forbidding any such abuse.
- To provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

## **POLICY**

Waverley Christian College is committed to promoting and protecting at all times the best interests of children involved in its programs.

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse.

Waverley Christian College has zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at Waverley Christian College is responsible for the care and protection of the children within our care and reporting information about suspected child abuse.

Child protection is a shared responsibility between the College, all employees, workers, contractors, associates, and members of the Waverley Christian College community, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people and applies across all school forums including camps and outside of school hours.

Waverley Christian College supports and respects all children, staff and volunteers. Waverley Christian College is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.

If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse, telephone 000.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Waverley Christian College Council has ultimate responsibility for the detection and prevention of child abuse and is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place. The College Council is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures and a Child Protection Code of Conduct are in place.

The Principal of Waverley Christian College is responsible for:

- Dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse;
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and the organisation's Child Protection Code of Conduct;
- Ensuring that all adults within the Waverley Christian College community are aware of their obligation to report suspected sexual abuse of a child in accordance with these policies and procedures;
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of their obligation to observe the Child Protection Code of Conduct (particularly as it relates to child safety);
- Providing support for staff, contractors and volunteers in undertaking their child protection responsibilities.

All Heads of School/Bursar must ensure that they:

- Promote child safety at all times;
- Assess the risk of child abuse within their area of control and eradicate / minimise any risk to the extent possible;
- Educate employees about the prevention and detection of child abuse; and
- Facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities.

Heads of School/Bursar should be familiar with the types of abuse that might occur within their area of responsibility and be alert for any indications of such conduct.

All staff/volunteers/contractors share in the responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse, and must:

- Familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the Child Protection Code of Conduct, and Waverley Christian College's policy and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements;
- Report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities (such as the police and / or the state-based child protection service) and fulfil their obligations as mandatory reporters (see: [Mandatory Reporting & Child Protection - Policy](#));
- Report any suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to their Head of School/Bursar and in addition, advise the relevant Chaplain (or, if their Head of School/Bursar is involved in the suspicion, report to another member of the SMT); and
- Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety.

The Chaplains, Heads of School/Bursar and Deputy Principal may be contacted in relation to matters of child protection.

## DEFINITIONS

- **Child** means a person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.
- **Child protection** means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.
- **Child abuse** means all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial (e.g. for financial gain) or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a child.
- **Child sexual assault** is any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.
- **Reasonable grounds for belief** is a belief based on reasonable grounds that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively assessed. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

- The child is in need of protection,
- The child has suffered or is likely to suffer "significant harm as a result of physical injury",
- The parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed if:

- A child states that they have been physically or sexually abused;
- A child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);
- Someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused;
- Professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused; and/or
- Signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

## EMPLOYMENT OF NEW PERSONNEL

Waverley Christian College undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all workers and volunteers which aims to:

- Promote and protect the safety of all children under the care of the organisation;
- Identify the safest and most suitable people who share Waverley Christian College's values and commitment to protect children; and
- Prevent a person from working at Waverley Christian College if they pose a risk to children.

Waverley Christian College requires all workers/volunteers to pass through the organisation's recruitment and screening processes prior to commencing their engagement with Waverley Christian College.

Persons applying for a role as a teacher with Waverley Christian College must be registered with Victorian Institute of Teaching.

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. Please see the [Working with Children Check](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website ([www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au)) for further information. A WWCC Register is maintained by the Human Resources.

Waverley Christian College may require applicants to provide a police check in accordance with the law and, as appropriate, before they commence working at Waverley Christian College and during their time with Waverley Christian College at regular intervals.

Waverley Christian College will undertake thorough reference checks as per the approved internal procedure.

Once engaged, workers/volunteers must review and acknowledge their understanding of this Policy and the Child Protection Code of Conduct.

## TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) 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; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to 'Child Protection Code of Conduct' Policy). 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.

## RISK MANAGEMENT

Waverley Christian College will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach.

Waverley Christian College has a Risk Management Working Group committed to identifying and managing risks at Waverley Christian College. The Risk Management Working Group members will receive regular training in relation to child safety.

## LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

Our organisation 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.<sup>1</sup>  
See: [Failure to Disclose Information](#)
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation 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.  
See: [Failure to Protect Information](#)
- **Grooming:** Predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time  
See [Grooming Information](#)

Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.<sup>2</sup>

See: [Mandatory Reporting & Child Protection](#)

## REPORTING

Any staff member, volunteer or contractor who has grounds to suspect abusive activity must immediately notify the Police or the appropriate child protection service. They should also immediately advise their Head of School/Bursar about their concern. Contractors should notify their supervisor who in turn will contact the appropriate Head of School/Bursar or the Deputy Principal/Principal.

[The Child Protection Student Fact Sheet](#), [Child Protection Reporting Policy](#), [Child Protection Reporting Template](#) and [The Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) provide useful resource in determining what steps to take.

In situations where the supervisor is suspected of involvement in the activity, or if the person having the suspicion does not believe that the matter is being appropriately addressed or dealt with, the matter should be reported to the next highest level of supervision. In the case of the Principal being suspected, a member of the Senior Management Team should be contacted.

Heads of School/Bursar must ensure complaints of suspected abusive behaviour or misconduct are reported to both the relevant Chaplain and the PRINCIPAL and also to any external regulatory body such as the police.

The Principal will report to the Victorian Institute of Teaching, any charges, committals for trial or convictions in relation to a sexual offense by a registered teacher.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, 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.

## **ALLEGATIONS, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS**

Waverley Christian College takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. The school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/caregivers. 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).

## **INVESTIGATING**

If the appropriate child protection service or the police decide to conduct an investigation of this report, all employees, contractors or volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, the Principal will consult with the authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate. If it is decided that such an investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the Principal may decide to conduct such an investigation. All employees, contractors and volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Any such investigation will be conducted according to the rules of natural justice.

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

The Principal will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other members of staff may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.

After an initial review and a determination that the suspected abuse warrants additional investigation, the Principal shall coordinate the investigation with the appropriate investigators and / or law enforcement officials. Internal or external legal representatives will be involved in the process, as deemed appropriate.

## **RESPONDING**

If it is alleged that a member of staff, contractor or a volunteer may have committed an offence or have breached the Child Protection Code of Conduct Policy, the person concerned may be stood down (with pay, where applicable) while an investigation is conducted.

If the investigation concludes that on the balance of probabilities an offence (or a breach of the organisation's policies or Child Protection Code of Conduct) has occurred, then disciplinary action may follow, up to and including dismissal or cessation of involvement with the organisation. The findings of the investigation will also be reported to any external body as required.

## **PRIVACY**

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. Waverley Christian College will have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected.

Everyone is entitled to know how the personal information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will be able to access it.

## **REVIEWING**

Every two years, and following every reportable incident, a review shall be conducted to assess whether the organisation's child protection policies or procedures require modification to better protect the children under the College's care.

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

[Child Protection Code of Conduct - Policy](#)

[Child Protection Reporting Policy](#)

[Child Protection Reporting Template](#)

[Child Protection Schools Guide](#)

[The Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)

[The Child Protection Student Fact Sheet](#)

Handling of Personal Information Disclosed by Students - Appendix

Mandatory Reporting & Child Protection - Policy

Safety - Policy

Sexual Harassment – Policy

Sexuality - Policy

Staff Code of Conduct - Policy

Student Support Framework

This policy must be read in conjunction with:

The law of the Commonwealth or of the relevant state or territory;

The organisation's Code of Conduct;

Termination of Employment Policy and Misconduct Procedures.

<b>SMT Member to Review</b>	Principal	<b>Date Reviewed</b>	Jul-16	<b>Next Review Date</b>	Jul-18
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