

CHILD SAFE STANDARD 2: CHILD SAFETY

PURPOSE

Mansfield Secondary College's Child Safety Policy sets out the school's commitment and approach to creating and maintaining a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe and provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, and contractors in the school environment, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people. This policy also applies to school council members where indicated.

The policy will apply to the school environment (see Definitions section). The policy covers both school hours and outside of school hours.

DEFINITIONS

Child Abuse

Child abuse includes:

- any act committed against a child involving:
 - a sexual offence; or
 - grooming; and
- the infliction, on a child, of:
 - physical violence; or
 - serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- serious neglect of a child.

Child-connected Work

Child-connected work means work authorised by the school, school council, or Secretary of the Department of Education and Training and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child Safety

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.

School Environment

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, homestays, and other school activities or events)
- structured workplace learning environments

School Staff

School staff means an individual working in a school environment who is:

- employed by the Department of Education and Training;
- directly engaged or employed by a school council; or
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary).

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STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY AND CHILD SAFETY PRINCIPLES

Mansfield Secondary College has a **zero tolerance of Child Abuse**. This child safety policy highlights our commitment to keep children safe within our school community. Child safety encompasses matters related to the protection of 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.

Ministerial Order No. 870 sets out the specific actions that our school community is required to undertake to meet the child safe standards.

The management and accountability of the risk of child abuse sits with the school council and the college Principal.

Aims

- To ensure that students in our care are kept safe from abuse. This includes children with particular vulnerabilities; e.g. Disabled children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- To ensure that school staff are provided with clear guidelines on how they are expected to behave with children under their care.
- To ensure that school staff are provided with the support to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters.
- To ensure that existing and prospective parents of students feel confident that their children will be safe in the care of our school staff.
- To ensure that our students are provided with education and support in understanding, identifying, discussing and reporting child safety matters.

Values

- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in the world. Australia ratified the CRC in December 1990. This means that as Australians we have a duty to ensure that all children in Australia enjoy the rights set out in the treaty. Children have the right to special protection because of their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse.
- Children have a right to be safe and protected, including at school. We are committed to keep children at our school safe. We acknowledge that there are vulnerable children within our community that require support and protection.
- As a school we are committed to our legal requirements for the care, safety and welfare of our students.
- We are committed to embedding a culture of child safety at school and to ensure that the school remains committed to a **zero tolerance of child abuse**.

Mansfield Secondary College is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making. Every person involved in Mansfield Secondary 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 and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

Child Safety Principles

In its planning, decision-making and operations, Mansfield Secondary College 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;

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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 concerns;
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

POLICY

Strategies to Embed a Child Safe Culture

Mansfield Secondary College's culture encourages staff, students, parents and the school community to raise, discuss and scrutinise child safety concerns. This makes it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

All child safety documents, including this policy, the Child Safety Code of Conduct (Appendix 1), the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures (Appendix 2), Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools and the Four Critical Actions for Schools are readily available online and in hard copy at the school's reception for all staff and students to read at any time.

Child safety is everyone's responsibility. **All school staff** are required to:

- Act in accordance with the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct, which clearly sets out the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour
- Act in accordance with the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures at all times, including following the Four Critical Actions for Schools where necessary
- Undertake annual guidance and training on child safety
- Act in accordance with their legal obligations, including:
 - Failure to disclose offence (applies to all adults)
 - Duty of care (applies to all school staff)
 - Mandatory reporting obligations (applies to all mandatory reporters, including teachers, principals, registered psychologists, and registered doctors and nurses)
 - Failure to protect offence (applies to a person in a position of authority within the school)
 - Reportable conduct obligations (applies to all school staff in reporting conduct to the principal, and applies to the principal in reporting to Employee Conduct Branch)
 - Organisational duty of care (applies to the school as an organisation)
 - For more information on these obligations, see Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools.

As part of Mansfield Secondary College's child safe culture, **school leadership** (including the principal and assistant principals) will:

- Consider the diversity 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, when implementing the Child Safe Standards
- Ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings and staff meetings
- Encourage and enable staff professional learning and training to build deeper understandings of child safety and prevention of abuse
- Ensure that no one is prohibited or discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to a person external to the school or from making records of any allegation.

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As part of Mansfield Secondary College's child safe culture, **school mandatory reporting staff** are required to:

- Complete the Protecting Children – Mandatory reporting and other obligations online module every year.
- Read the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document
- Read the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document
- Read the school's Child Safety Policy (this document) on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document.

As part of Mansfield Secondary College's child safe culture, in performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, **school councils and school council members** will:

- Ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings
- Consider the diversity 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, when making decisions regarding the Child Safe Standards
- Undertake annual guidance and training on child safety, such as the Child Safe Standards School Council Training PowerPoint.
- Approve the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members, and if updated, note the new document in its school council meeting minutes
- When hiring employees, ensure that selection, supervision and management practices are child safe (unless delegated to the principal).

School leadership will maintain records of the above processes.

Roles and Responsibilities

School leaders 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 school's Child Safety Code of Conduct, which sets out clearly the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Specific child safety responsibilities:

- Assistant Principal – Student Services is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy every three years.
- Assistant Principal – Student Services is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy. The school community should contact Assistant Principal – Student Services if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy.
- Assistant Principal – Student Services is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available.
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in Mansfield Secondary College's other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and risk assessment register.

How We Intend to Support or Assist Children in Our Care Who Disclose Child Abuse

- We will protect a child in our care who discloses child abuse.
- We will provide counselling to all students in our care who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.

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- We will, where practicable, support, encourage and enable children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters.
- We will, where practicable, support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.

Recruitment

Mansfield Secondary College follows the Department's Recruitment in Schools guide to ensure child safe recruitment practices, available on the [Department's website](#).

All prospective volunteers are required to comply with our school's Volunteers Policy, including in relation to assessing the suitability of prospective volunteers and obtaining checks required under this policy.

Training and Supervision

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

Our school culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in coming forward with any allegations or suspicions 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. This training occurs annually or more often as required.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse, to promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability and vulnerable children.

New employees and volunteers will be inducted into the school, including by being referred to the Child Safety Policy (this document), the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures on the school website. They will also be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school's commitment to child safety, and that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. All employees of our school will be monitored and assessed via regular performance review to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported by school staff to the Principal or Assistant Principal and will be managed in accordance with Mansfield Secondary College's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures where required.

Reporting a Child Safety Concern or Complaint

The school has clear expectations for all staff and volunteers (including homestay providers) in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. All staff (including school council employees) must follow the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) if there is an incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse. Immediate actions should include reporting their concerns to DHHS Child Protection, Victoria Police and/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.

Mansfield Secondary College will never prohibit or discourage school staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse. The school will always take action to respond to a complaint in accordance with the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures. In accordance with Action 4 of the Four Critical Actions for Schools, Mansfield Secondary College will provide ongoing support for students affected by child abuse.

The Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures can be found at www.mansfieldsc.vic.edu.au

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Risk Reduction and Management

Mansfield Secondary College believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes, found in the school's risk assessment register. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.

We will identify and mitigate the risks of child abuse in school environments by taking into account the nature of each school environment, the activities expected to be conducted in that environment and the characteristics and needs of all children expected to be present in that environment.

Mansfield Secondary College monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the actions it takes to reduce or remove risks to child safety, more information can be found in the school's risk assessment register.

Listening to, Communicating With and Empowering Children

Mansfield Secondary 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. Our school is committed to supporting and encouraging students to use their voice to raise and share their concerns with a trusted adult at any time of need. Students can access information on how to report abuse at school reception.

When the school 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 and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (and/or their parents/carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

The school will promote the Child Safe Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children, including:

- All of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for the students and parents at Mansfield Secondary College to read at school reception and on our website.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school
- School newsletters will inform students and the school community about the school's commitment to child safety, and strategies or initiatives that the school is taking to ensure student safety

Other Actions Our School takes to Promote the Child Safe Standards Include:

- Child safety applies to all aspects of school environments, including the physical school environment, school camps, counselling, first aid, bus travel and students with high support needs.
- Management will require staff to declare the context of their involvement with current students outside of school endorsed activities.
- Management will conduct a risk management audit on child safety within the school.
- Management will take appropriate steps to ensure that child safety is considered in the recruitment, selection of staff (including contractors and volunteers). This will involve:
 - Working with Children Check Status, or similar check;
 - Proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications;
 - The Person's history of work involving children; and
 - References that addresses the person's suitability for the job and working with children.
- Management will set a clear code of conduct (see Appendix 1) for all staff members of the school community to abide by. This code is designed to clearly establish what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour when working with children under their care.
- The college will do what is practicable to supervise, monitor and assess a job occupant's suitability for child connected work.

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- Staff will do what is practicable to manage the school environment on campus, online and at other locations to reduce the risk of child abuse
- Management will ensure the community engages in a process to regularly monitor the community's adherence to this policy

How We Intend to Support, Encourage and Enable Our Community to Understand, Identify, Discuss and Report Child Safety Matters

- Management will clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of all persons involved in the protection of children at the school so that everyone in our community is clear on who they can report a child safety concern to.
- Professional development and staff meeting time, dedicated to discussing scenarios of child safety concerns, will support, encourage and enable staff to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters.
- The college community through communications such as the newsletter and school website will be provided with information about the school's responsibility to report child abuse.
- Information evenings and communications such as the college newsletter and website will highlight the definition and processes involved to make a report to the school. Procedures for reporting child abuse will be made available for members of our wider community via downloadable report forms via our website.
- Students will be provided with strategies to promote child empowerment and participation through education about standards of behaviour for students attending the school. This will involve the education of healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality), resilience and child abuse awareness and prevention.

How We Intend to Support or Assist Children in Our Care Who Disclose Child Abuse

- We will protect a child in our care who discloses child abuse.
- We will provide counselling to all students in our care who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.
- We will, where practicable, support, encourage and enable children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters.
- We will, where practicable, support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.

The school will also use its health and wellbeing programs to deliver appropriate education to its students about:

- standards of behaviour for students attending the school;
- healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality);
- resilience; and
- child abuse awareness and prevention.
- Respectful Relationships

Communications

This school is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- Ensuring that the Child Safety Policy (this document), Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure are available on the school website.
- Once per term reminders in the school newsletter of our school's commitment to child safety
- Ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings and staff meetings for discussion

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Confidentiality and Privacy

This school 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 Department of Education and Training's [Schools' Privacy Policy](#).

Related Policies and Documents

Related policies and documents include:

- Code of Conduct
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures
- Risk assessment register
- [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- [Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools](#)
- [Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [School Policy and Advisory Guide – Duty of Care](#)
- [School Policy and Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations](#).

Policy Evaluation and Review

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed every year. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school community.

Approval

School Principal: Timothy Hall

Date of last review: 24 August 2020

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Appendix 1: CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

Principles For Adult's Behaviour in Undertaking Child-connected Work

Some simple principles should guide an adult's behaviour when undertaking child-connected work within our school community such as:

- the adult/child relationship should be professional at all times
- an adult's response to a child's behaviour or circumstance should be commensurate with the child's age and vulnerability and the adult's responsibility for the care, safety and welfare of the child
- an adult should not be alone with a child unless there is line of sight to other adults
- an adult should not initiate or seek inappropriate physical contact or inappropriate social contact with children outside school.

Mansfield Secondary College recognises that, as a school in an isolated rural context, our staff are often and unavoidably involved with students outside the school context. We recognise that this involvement does at times mean students are appropriately within our homes and our social clubs. We recognise the absolute importance of protecting the safety of our young people. We also value and celebrate the appropriate interactions that we have with school-aged young people in the broader community.

Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviours

Acceptable Behaviours

All staff, volunteers and board/school council members are responsible for supporting the safety of children by:

- adhering to the school's child safe policy and upholding the school's statement of commitment to child safety at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating everyone in the school community with respect
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child's self-identification)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination)
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities)
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not alone with a child
- reporting any allegations of child abuse or safety concerns to the school's leadership (or child safety officer if the school has appointed someone to this role)
- understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to mandatory reporting and reporting under the Crimes Act 1958
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe
- reporting to the Victorian Institute of Teaching any charges, committals for trial or convictions in relation to a sexual offence by a registered teacher, or certain allegations or concerns about a registered teacher.
- Mansfield Secondary College recognises that staff store and maintain contact details for students in order to support the learning activities with which they are engaged. The college council believes that this is appropriate.

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- Mansfield Secondary College recognises that staff have contact with students through the social and sporting clubs of the wider community. The college council believes that this is appropriate.
- Mansfield Secondary College recognises that some staff have school-aged children and that their children's friends visit their homes. The college council believes that this is appropriate.

Unacceptable Behaviours

Staff and volunteers must not:

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse
- develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
- use student (contact) details for inappropriate purposes
- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example, sitting on laps)
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)
- initiate unnecessary physical contact which children or do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities)
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- express discriminatory personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- discriminate against any child, including because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability
- store images of school students on a personal device without the consent of the parent or guardians