

Child Safety Policy

1. Purpose

This Child Safety Policy sets out the school approach to creating 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](#). The Princes Hill Secondary College Child Safety Code of Conduct is incorporated as part of this policy and aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. The Code of Conduct also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations.

2. Policy Statement

Princes Hill Secondary 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. Princes Hill Secondary College has zero tolerance for child abuse. Princes Hill Secondary 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 such as our International Students, as well as the safety of LGBTQI+ children and those with a disability. Every person involved in Princes Hill Secondary College has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she/they 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.

In planning, decision-making and operations Princes Hill 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;
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;
11. Focus on and address the inability of some International Students to report child abuse due to language and cultural factors.

3. Implementation

Our Children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our school. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say. We promote diversity and acceptance in our school, and 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 who identify as LGBTQI+ are safe and supported.
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Our Staff and Volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our school as outlined in the [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#). All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#) which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

Training and Supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our 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 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, promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of LGBTQI+ children and those with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school'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 (see our [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#) to understand appropriate behaviour further). 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 (see the [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy](#)).

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities.

Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations. We encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of LGBTQI+ children and those with a disability.

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](#) website for further information. We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) 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.

Fair Procedures for Personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence. We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our [Standard Reporting Form](#), including investigation updates. All records are securely stored. If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect 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 any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative Responsibilities

Our school 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. 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.
- **Failure to Protect:** People of authority in our school 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. Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties.

Further information about the [Failure to Disclose](#) or [Failure to Protect](#) offences is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website.

Risk Management

In Victoria, schools are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children. We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in schools and non-school settings on social media).

[Child Safe Standard 6](#), requires schools to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate risk management strategies to ensure child safety in school environments. A child safety risk management strategy is a formal and structured approach to managing risks associated with child safety. The [Princes Hill Secondary College Risk Management Strategies](#) reflect the result of an assessment of risk for the school and associated ratings, strategies and responsibilities.

Allegations, Concerns and Complaints

Our school takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. 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). If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred, then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the 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
- observing suspicious behaviour

Reporting to Child Protection

Information and guidance on how to report to child protection is provided in every staffroom. Staff are encouraged to contact the [Child Safety Officer](#), relevant sub-school and year level coordinators, the student wellbeing leader, and principals if they have formed a belief that an incident has occurred.

Staff will follow the 'Four Critical Actions for Schools' in relation to [suspected child abuse](#) or [suspected student sexual offending](#).

See the [Department of Health and Human Services](#) website for information about how to make a report to child protection.

Child Safety Code of Conduct

Princes Hill Secondary College is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development.

This Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, Department policy, school policies and procedures and professional standards, codes or ethics as these apply to staff and other personnel.

The Principal and school leaders of Princes Hill Secondary College will support implementation and monitoring of the Code of Conduct, and will plan, implement and monitor arrangements to provide an inclusive, safe and orderly school and other learning environments. The Principal and school leaders of Princes Hill Secondary College will also provide information and support to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively.

All staff, contractors, volunteers and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work are required to comply with the Code of Conduct by observing expectations for appropriate behaviour below. The Code of Conduct applies in all school situations, including school camps and in the use of digital technology and social media.

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work individually, we are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- upholding this Child Safety Policy.
- treating students and families in the school community with respect both within the school environment and outside the school environment as part of normal social and community activities.
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, 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 students.
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of LGBTQI+ children and those with a disability.
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability.
- reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the school's Child Safety Officer.
- understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including [mandatory reporting](#)) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse.
- if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work we must not:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse.
- develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, offering gifts).
- exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as abusive and not justified by the educational, therapeutic, or service delivery context.
- ignore behaviours by other adults towards students when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate.
- discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental guidance, delivering the education curriculum or a therapeutic setting.
- treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity.
- communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to school work or extracurricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter.
- photograph or video a child in a school environment except in accordance with school policy or where required for [Duty of Care](#) purposes.
- in the school environment or at other school events where students are present, consume alcohol contrary to [DET Policy](#) or take illicit drugs under any circumstances.

Key Contacts and Further Information

Staff at Princes Hill Secondary College can access further information relating to child safety from the [Victorian Registration and Qualifications](#) website.

Parents who have questions or concerns about the standards are welcome to contact the school through the school email enquiries@phsc.vic.edu.au.

Key contacts for information and advice (see [school contact information](#)):

Child Safety Officer

Student Wellbeing Leader

4. Evaluation & Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. The school will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute to reviews. Where possible, we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

5. Definitions

6. References

[Department of Justice and Regulation](#)

[Department of Human Services](#)

[Schools Policy Advisory Guide \(SPAG\) - Child Safe Standards](#)

[Child Safe Standards - School Resources](#) **(Internal Only)**

7. Related Policies

[Administration of Medication Policy](#)

[Anaphylaxis Policy](#)

[Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy](#)

[Duty of Care Policy](#)

[First Aid Policy](#)

[Healthcare Needs Policy](#)

Policy Controls

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