



# Child Safety Policy

## CHILD SAFE STANDARD 2

This policy is required and informed by section 8 of Ministerial Order 870 – Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools. All Victorian schools must have a Child Safety Policy or statement of commitment to child safety under Child Safe Standard 2.

### PURPOSE

Victorian College for the Deaf's Child Safety Policy sets out the school's 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.

### SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, and contractors at the school, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people.

The policy will apply to the school environment, including:

- Online school environments (including email and intranet systems), and
- Other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events).

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
  - serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- serious neglect of a child.

#### *Child-connected work*

Child-connected work means work authorised by the school governing authority 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 governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- 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, and other events).

### *School staff*

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

- directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider
- a minister of religion

## **POLICY**

### **Statement of commitment to child safety and child safety principles**

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

Victorian College for the Deaf has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Victorian College for the Deaf 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 Victorian College for the Deaf 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.

### **Child safety principles**

In its planning, decision-making and operations Victorian College for the Deaf 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.

### **A child safe culture**

Victorian College for the Deaf’s culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise child safety concerns. This makes it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

Victorian College for the Deaf's [Commitment to Child Safe Practices](#), plus our [Child Safe Standards – Code of Conduct](#), is available on our website.

As part of Victorian College for the Deaf's child safe culture, **school leadership** will:

- Ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings, SIT 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.

As part of Victorian College for the Deaf's child safe culture, **school teaching staff and leadership 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 Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures on induction and maintain familiarity with that document.
- Read the school's Child Safety Policy on induction and maintain familiarity with that document.
- Participate in learning about the 4 critical actions areas through annual PLC sessions

School leadership will maintain records of the above processes.

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

- Act in accordance with the School's Code of Conduct, which clearly sets out the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.
- Act in accordance with the Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures at all times, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) where necessary.
- Act in accordance with their legal obligations, including:
  - Failure to disclose offence (applies to adults)
  - Duty of care (applies to all school staff)
  - Mandatory reporting obligations (applies to all mandatory reporters, including teachers, principals and registered doctors, nurses and psychologists)
  - Failure to protect offence (applies to a person in a position of authority within the school)
  - Reportable conduct obligations (applies to school leadership roles)
  - Organisational duty of care (applies to the school as an organisation)

## 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 Code of Conduct, which sets out clearly the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Specific child safety responsibilities:

- School Principal or delegate is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy every 2 years.
- School Principal or delegate is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy.
- School Principal or delegate is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available.

Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in Victorian College for the Deaf's other child safety policies and procedures, including the Code of Conduct, Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, and risk assessment register.

## Human resources and recruitment practices

Victorian College for the Deaf applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children, including:

- We will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse.
- All prospective staff and volunteers are required to undergo a Working with Children Check.
- All position descriptions for jobs that involve child-connected work with our school include the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities with respect to child safety and the job occupant's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety.
- We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety. Job advertisements for child-connected work include a link to the school's Code of Conduct, which is publicly available on our website.
- We carry out verbal reference checks with at least two referees to verify job applicants' history of and suitability for working with children. Our school also requires applicants for child-connected jobs to provide proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications.

## 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 (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 to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

Staff receive child safe training through an annual commitment of at least 1-2 PLC sessions to focus on Child Protect and the 4 critical actions.

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 children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees will be inducted into the school and 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 through the Principal or Assistant Principal or directly to DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

## **Reporting a child safety concern or complaint**

The school has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. All staff must report to the Principal or Assistant Principal who will follow the school's Child Safety Reporting Obligations 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 any concerns to the Principal or Assistant Principal, the DHHS Child Protection or another appropriate agency and notifying of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns.

Victorian College for the Deaf 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 Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures. In accordance with Action 4 of the Four Critical Actions for Schools, Victorian College for the Deaf will provide ongoing support for students affected by child abuse.

## **Risk reduction and management**

Victorian College for the Deaf believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes. 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.

Victorian College for the Deaf will ensure that it keeps, reviews and continually updates a risk assessment register, including the actions the school will take to reduce or remove the identified risks.

Victorian College for the Deaf enable opportunities through Headstart week and student survey to collect data that is relevance to the psychological safety and wellbeing of all students. VCD also include child safety as an item at school assemblies.

## **Listening to, communicating with and empowering children**

The school 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.

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 of things and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (or their parents/carers) 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:

- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school
- PROTECT Child Safe pin board with easy-to-understand Child Safe messages and standards on permanent display.
- Discussion at school assemblies
- Particular topics for parent information nights – e.g. cyber bullying, consent etc
- 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

The school will use its Respectful Relationships program to deliver appropriate education to its students about:

- standards of behaviour for students attending the school;
- healthy and respectful relationships;
- resilience; and
- child abuse awareness and prevention.

## **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 School Privacy Policy.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

- Victorian College for the Deaf Child Safe Standards - Code of Conduct
- VCD Commitment to Child Safe Practices
- VCD Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures

## **COMMUNICATION**

This policy will be communicated to the school community via:

- School website
- Staff induction and handbook
- Staff meetings
- Annual staff and school council training

## **REVIEW CYCLE**

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed every 3 years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school community.

The school Principal or delegate is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy every 3 years.

## Principal endorsement

Endorsed by: Marg Tope

Date: 16/11/2021

