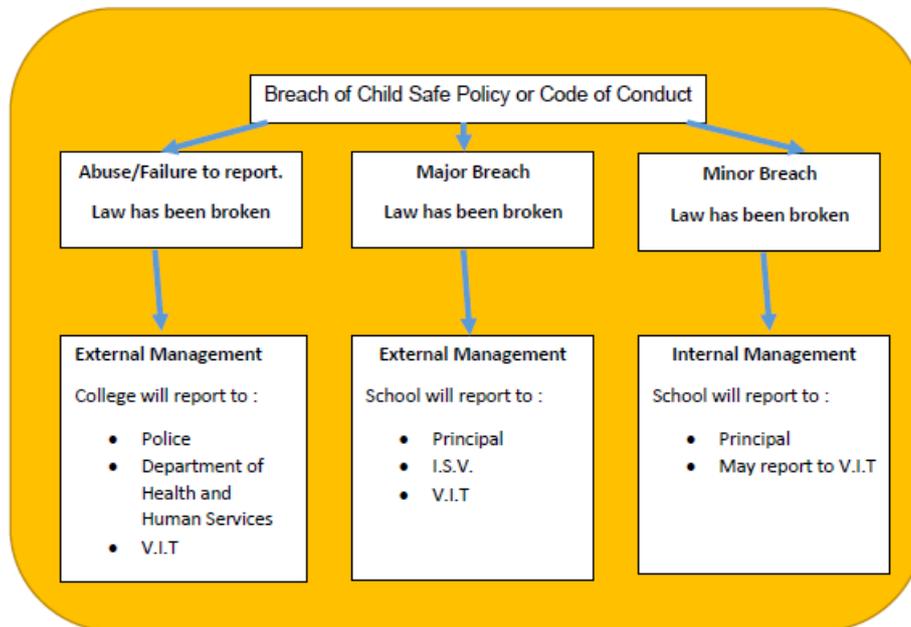


Child Safety Policy 2017

Rationale:

Implement compulsory child safe standards to protect children from harm according to the Child Safety and Wellbeing Act.



Aims:

Mt Hira College is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children by providing a child safe environment.

This policy considers relevant legislative requirements within the state of Victoria, including specific requirements of the Child Safe Standards as set out in Ministerial Order No. 870.

This policy applies to College staff, volunteers and contractors.

Mt Hira College is committed to the safety of all children and has zero tolerance for child abuse. At Mt Hira College we strive to ensure all students feel safe, happy and empowered as we support and respect all members of the College community. This includes the safety and wellbeing of our students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds along with students with a disability.

Mt Hira College is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks.

All staff at Mt Hira College will be required to have an induction on the College's Child Protection and Safety Policy while the Staff handbook, which all staff are required to read, will include Mandatory Reporting Policy and the Child Safety Code of Conduct. All allegations and safety concerns are treated seriously.

Commitment to Students

- We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people (students) enrolled in our College.
- We commit to providing students with positive and nurturing experiences.
- We commit to listening to students and empowering them by taking their views seriously and addressing any concerns that they raise with us.
- We commit to taking action to ensure that students are protected from abuse and harm,
- We commit to teaching students the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing.

For our parents and carers, we commit to:

- communicating honestly and openly with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children
- engaging with, and listening to, the views of parents and carers about our child-safety practice, policies and procedures
- transparency in our decision-making with parents and carers where it will not compromise the safety of children or young people
- acknowledging the cultural diversity of students and families, and being sensitive to how this may impact on student safety issues
- continuously reviewing and improving our systems to protect children from abuse
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For our College employees, direct contact volunteers, direct contact contractors and College Board members, we commit to:

- Providing all Mt Hira College employees, direct contact contractors, direct contact volunteers, and College Board members with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles. This will include regular and appropriate learning opportunities in

regards to Child Safe standards including mandatory child protection training for all employees

- providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm policy and procedures in relation to child safety and young people's protection and wellbeing. This will include annual training in the principles and intent of the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct, and employees, direct contact contractors, direct contact volunteers, and College Board members responsibilities to report concerns.
- listening to all concerns voiced by Mt Hira College employees, direct contact contractors, direct contact volunteers, and College Board members about keeping children and young people safe from harm.
- providing opportunities for College employees, direct contact volunteers, direct contact contractors, and College Board members to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from their support of a child or young person who has experienced abuse.
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Implementation

At Mt Hira College, we expect all staff, volunteers and contractors to proactively ensure the safety of students at all times and to take appropriate action if there are concerns about the safety of any child at the College. All College staff must remain familiar with relevant laws, code of conduct and policies and procedures in relation to child protection and to comply with all requirements.

- All staff play a crucial role in protecting children in their care.
- All staff must act as soon as they witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.
- All staff must act if they form a suspicion or reasonable belief, even if they are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (hearing it from a third party).
- If a staff member believes that a child is not subject to abuse, but still holds significant concern for the wellbeing of a child, they still need to act. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from Child First (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support) or the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection or Victoria Police.
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Responding to an Emergency – Immediate Harm

If a child is at immediate risk of harm, you must ensure their safety by:

- Separating the alleged victim/s and others involved
- Administer first aid if required
- Call 000 for urgent medical and / or police assistance to respond to immediate health or safety concerns.
- Identifying a contact person (College Counsellor, Head of Student Wellbeing, Principal, Assistant Principal) for future liaison with the Police.
- Maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

Reporting

- As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you must report all incidents, suspicions, and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.
- You must report all instances of suspected child abuse involving a staff member, contractor or volunteer to Victoria Police
- You must also report internally to the College Principal. If in conflict, report to another staff member in authority.
- You must report to DHHD Child Protection if a child is considered to be:
 - In need of protection from child abuse
 - At risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is likely to have a serious impact on the child's safety, neglect and emotional abuse stability or development.
 - You must also report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming – befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child and sometimes the family, to lower the child's inhibitions for child sexual abuse) to Victoria Police.
 - You must also report all instances to the College Principal.

Contacting Parents/Carers

The College Principal must consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:

- Not to contact the parents/carers (e.g. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in abuse or the child is a mature minor and does not wish their parents/ carers to be contacted)
- To contact the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion).

Support

Mt Hira College will provide for the child/ren impacted by abuse. A student support plan will be developed with wellbeing professionals.

Recruitment

Mt Hira College will take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. Employment advertisements clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and awareness of social and legislative responsibilities. A rigorous screening process is applied in the recruitment of employees, volunteers and contractors. When selecting employees, Mt Hira College makes all reasonable efforts to:

- Obtain a copy of a valid Working with Children Check or Victorian Institute of Teaching registration.
- Obtain proof of personal identity.
- History of working with children.
- Obtain references that address the applicant's suitability for the job of working with children.
- Where immediate tradespeople need to undertake work, they will not be left unsupervised.
- Mt Hira College monitors and assesses the continuing suitability of College staff, volunteers and contractors to work with children.

Education and Training

Mt Hira College provides employees and volunteers with regular and appropriate opportunities to develop their knowledge in abilities to address child safety matters. This includes ongoing training and professional learning to ensure that all staff understand their professional and legal obligations and responsibilities and the procedures for reporting suspicion of child abuse or neglect.

Review

Mt Hira College is committed to continuous improvement to child safety procedures and practices. This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it is working in practice and updated to accommodate changes in legislation.

Definitions

Child: child or young person enrolled at the College.

Child abuse: includes:

- An act committed against a child involving:

- A sexual offence
- An offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
- The infliction, on a child, of:
 - Physical violence
 - Serious emotional or psychological harm
- Serious neglect of a child (Ministerial Order No. 870)

Child safety: encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing 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).

Child neglect: the failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and wellbeing.

Child physical abuse: generally, child physical abuse refers to the non-accidental use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Physically abusive behaviours include shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning. The fabrication or induction of an illness by a parent or carers is also considered physically abusive behaviour.

Child protection: statutory services designed to protect children who are at risk of harm.

Child sexual abuse: any sexual activity between a child under the age of consent (16) and an adult or older person (i.e. a person five or more years older than the victim) is child sexual abuse.

Child sexual abuse can also be:

- Any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult in a position of power or authority over them (e.g. a teacher); the age of consent laws do not apply in such instances due to the strong imbalance of power that exists between young people and authority figures, as well as breaching of both personal and public trust that occurs when professional boundaries are violated.
- Any sexual behaviour between an adult family member, regardless of issues of consent, equality or coercion.
- Sexual activity between peers that is non-consensual or involves the use of power or coercion
- Non-consensual sexual activity between minors (e.g. a 14 year old and an 11 year old), or any sexual behaviour between a child and another child or adolescent who,

due to their age or stage of development, is in a position of power, trust or responsibility over the victim. Sexual activity between adolescents at a similar developmental level is not considered abuse.

Mandatory reporting: the legal requirement to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect is known as mandatory reporting. Mandated persons include teachers, nurses, police, psychologists, psychiatrists and medical practitioners.

Reasonable belief: when staff are concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person, they must assess that concern to determine if a report should be made to the relevant agency. This process of considering all relevant information and observations is known as forming 'reasonable belief'. 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.

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

- Online school environments (including emails)
- 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.)

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

- Directly engaged or employed by the College governing authority
- A volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)
- A minister of religion (Ministerial Order No. 780)

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the Mandatory Reporting Policy and Crimes Act. 1958 Policy

Ratified by the Board:

Chairperson: Mr. Ken Yucel

Signature:

Date:

This policy will be communicated to staff, parents, students and the wider community through one or more of the following channels: newsletter, assemblies, staff/student handbook, College website, staff meetings and information sessions.

This policy will be reviewed as part of the College's 2 year review cycle.