



This is required to be reviewed annually

Date approved: June 2020

Date of next review: 2021

PURPOSE

Doncaster Secondary College Child Safety Policy sets out the college'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 college's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

Doncaster 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.

Doncaster Secondary College has a commitment to zero tolerance for child abuse. We support and respect all children as well as our staff and volunteers. Doncaster 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. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and / or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability. We want all children at this college to be safe, happy and empowered.

Every person involved in Doncaster 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. We have legal and moral obligations, which we follow rigorously, to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety.

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 college 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.

This policy focuses on establishing mechanisms to:

- ensure all children feel safe and supported at the college.
- prevent child abuse by identifying risks earlier, and removing and reducing these risks.
- ensure that processes and procedures are in place to protect children from child abuse.
- value and empower children in decision making processes.
- ensure that all staff (including contractors), volunteers, visitors to the college, and parents / carers, understand the college's child safety guidelines and how to behave appropriately with and towards children.
- comply with Ministering Order No. 870 and the Child Safety Standards.
- comply with reporting obligations under child protection law and criminal law.

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 college, college 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); and
- 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)

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).

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY AND CHILD SAFETY PRINCIPLES

At Doncaster Secondary College our vision is 'to create a positive learning community that enables all students to achieve their potential and become confident, effective learners who contribute productively to society' At Doncaster Secondary College we understand that when children and young people feel safe, this has a significant positive impact on their attitudes to learning, social relationships, achievement and lifelong outcomes. We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people as we know that children can struggle to achieve their personal best if they are not safe from abuse.

At Doncaster Secondary College our values guide the decisions and behaviours of all members of our school community, including in relation to child safety:

- **Respect** – for ourselves and others – Caring for, understanding, accepting and appreciating ourselves and others.
- **Responsibility** – Demonstrating ownership of our actions and words. Being accountable for our actions.
- **Resilience** – to embrace challenges with optimism and perseverance. Accepting challenges, trying hard and not giving up easily.
- **Teamwork** – working co-operatively with others.

Child safety principles

Doncaster Secondary College is committed to child safety.

In its planning, decision-making and operations Doncaster 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 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;
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers;
11. In implementing the minimum child safety standards Doncaster Secondary College will take account of the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable; and make reasonable efforts to accommodate these matters

POLICY

Strategies to embed a child safe culture:

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

All child safety documents, including this policy, the college's [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#), and the [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations \(including Mandatory Reporting\) Policy and Procedures](#), along with [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#) and the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) are readily available online via our website and in hard copy at the College's main front office 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 college'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 Doncaster 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 college or from making records of any allegation.

As part of Doncaster 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 college's Child Safety Code of Conduct on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document
- Read the college's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document
- Read the college's Child Safety Policy (this document) on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document.

As part of Doncaster 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 standing 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

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

Specific child safety responsibilities:

- The Assistant Principal/s (Wellbeing/Policy) is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy every year.
- The Assistant Principal/s (Wellbeing/Policy/OHS) are responsible for monitoring the college's compliance with the Child Safety Policy. The college community should approach them if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy.
- The Assistant Principal (Wellbeing/Policy) is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available.
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in Doncaster 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.

Recruitment:

Doncaster 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 college'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 college 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. **NOTE:** the Ministerial Order on Child Safe Standards requires schools to ensure that appropriate guidance and training is provided to their staff and school council members "at least annually" on roles and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse, child abuse risks in the school environment, and the school's current child safety standards.

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 and they will be provided with Child Safety training. They will be provided with 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. These documents are also available on the Doncaster Secondary College 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 Doncaster 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.

Doncaster 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, Doncaster Secondary College will provide ongoing support for students affected by child abuse.

The Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures can be found on the Doncaster Secondary College Website via the following link: [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations \(including Mandatory Reporting\) Policy and Procedures](#)

Risk reduction and management:

Doncaster 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 Child Safety 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.

Doncaster 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 college's Child Safety Risk Assessment Register.

Listening to, communicating with and empowering children:

Doncaster 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 college operations and builds the capability of children and parents/carers to understand their rights and their responsibilities. Our college 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 via our College Website and at various locations around the College.

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

The college 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 via the Doncaster Secondary College website.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the college
- 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
- age-appropriate discussion of child safety with students,
- Child safety policies and procedures are written in child-friendly language or a language other than English that is relevant to your school,
- the Four Critical Actions are actively taught to mandatory reporters and other school staff,
- Consulting with key stakeholders in regards to the Child Safety Risk Register,
- Doncaster Secondary College promotes the Child Safe Standards

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

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

Doncaster Secondary College delivers the following specific health and wellbeing programs

- Resilience Rights and Respectful Relationships
- Sexuality education
- ECASA
- I-Matter
- Anti-Bullying

Communications:

This college is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the college 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 college website
- Once per term reminders in the college newsletter of our college's commitment to child safety
- Ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings and staff meetings for discussion
- Volunteer induction processes and staff training
- Placing visual displays throughout the school

Confidentiality and privacy:

Related policies and documents include:

- [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#)
- [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations \(including Mandatory Reporting\) Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Child Protection Making a Report](#)
- [Child Protection Reporting Obligations](#)
- 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 annually.

The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school community.

PENDING COLLEGE COUNCIL APPROVAL