

Child Safe Policy incorporating the VRQA Child Safe Standards



Pakenham Secondary College is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all students at the school.

Rationale:

On 26 November 2015, the Victorian Parliament passed the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015 to introduce child safe standards into law. The Standards will commence from 1 January 2016 for most organisations working with children, with the aim of promoting cultural change in the way organisations manage risk of child abuse and neglect.

The child safe standards are part of the Victorian Government's response to the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations. The Betray of Trust Report found that while the majority of children are safe in organisations and in the community, more work could be done to strengthen existing approaches to child safety.

The child safe standards aim to drive cultural change in organisations that provide services for children so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in everyday thinking and practice.

The Child Safe Standards

To create and maintain a child safe organisation, Pakenham Secondary College must have:

Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, through effective leadership arrangements

Standard 2: A Child Safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety (See Appendix 1 "Our Commitment to Child Safety")

Standard 3: A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children (see Appendix 2 "Child Safety Code of Conduct")

Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel (See VIT and Working with Children Policies)

Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse (see Pakenham Secondary College's Mandatory Reporting Policy and Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy)

Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse (Appendix 3 "Child Safety Risk Management Program")

Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children (See Pakenham Secondary College's "Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy")

Policy Statement

Pakenham Secondary College strives to implement the Child Safe Standards to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students at the College and promote an organisational culture that manages the risk of child abuse and neglect. The school has developed policies and procedures specifically aimed at keeping children safe. The standards as Outlined in the Rationale provide a framework to identify gaps and improve policy and practices around child safety.

The College Principal will take overall responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented and adhered to across the College. They will be expected to provide authoritative advice, promote awareness of the policy and ensure key personnel are appropriately trained and made aware of their roles and responsibilities in promoting a child safe environment.

Child Safe Definitions:

Key Definitions

A full list of definitions for Ministerial Order No. 870 is available at www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe.

Child abuse includes—

- any act committed against a child involving—
 - a sexual offence or
 - an offence under section 49B(2) of the *Crimes Act 1958* (grooming)
- the infliction, on a child, of—
 - physical violence or
 - serious emotional or
 - psychological harm or
 - serious neglect of a child.

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 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 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:

- 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, and other events).

School staff means:

- in a government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:
 - employed under Part 2.4 of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (ETR Act) in the government teaching service or
 - employed under a contract of service by the council of the school under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act or
 - a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary).
 - in a non-government school, 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 (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)
 - a minister of religion.
 - **School governing authority** means:
 - The proprietor of a school, including a person authorised to act for or on behalf of the proprietor; or
 - The governing body for a school (however described), as authorised by the proprietor of a school or the ETR Act; or
 - The principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school, the school governing body, or the ETR Act.
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APPENDIX ONE:

Pakenham Secondary College
Our Commitment to Child Safety

Pakenham Secondary College is committed to child safety. We want children who attend our College to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.

As a school we are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children and have zero tolerance of child abuse. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our and the Department of Education and Training's robust policies and procedures. Employees are supported to ensure they meet their legal and moral obligation to contact authorities when concern is raised about a child's safety.

The College is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, with a view to removing and reducing these risks. We have robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers and are committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

The College supports and respects all children regardless of their background and we have specific policies, procedures and training in place that will support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

Staff are aware that if a child is at immediate risk of abuse then the staff member should dial "000"

Our children

This policy is intended to empower all children who we see as vital and active participants in our school. They are involved when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We work to promote diversity and acceptance in our school to ensure that all people are treated with respect; we challenge homophobic, sexist, or racist comments made about students, parents and teachers. We support the safety, participation and empowerment of all students regardless of race, gender and cultural or family background.

Our staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our school.

All of our staff and volunteers are required to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Code of Conduct.

Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that staff at Pakenham Secondary College understand that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

The culture of our College 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. Each year staff are trained to identify, assess and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse. This training is also extended to each member of the School Council.

Every year all staff are expected to complete the on-line training module on Mandatory Reporting and other Child Safety obligations.

The College also supports staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse and 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. At Pakenham Secondary College this is further supported by allocating Positions of Responsibility to oversee the PSD program as well as the Marrung Strategy. Further to this, Cultural Liaison Officers are used to support students who come from a background other than English.

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 as per the code of conduct outlined in Appendix 2 of this Policy. (also refer to the school's Student Engagement and Well-Being Policy as well as It Values and Vision Policy to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour is reported to the appropriate authorities, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

All reasonable steps are undertaken to employ skilled people to work with children and successful applicants for all positions will be expected to show proof of identity, proof of qualifications, and either have VIT registration or a Working With Children Check. Selection criteria and advertisements are developed which clearly demonstrate the School's commitment to child safety. Our school understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations to ensure a Child Safe environment.

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. The [Working with Children Check](#) website can be accessed for further information. When recruiting staff to the school, reference checks and police record checks are undertaken through the VIT registration process to ensure that the right people are being recruited.

All positions advertised through Recruitment-on-Line (ROL) will include the standard "Child Safe Environments" clause as provided in the "Recruitment in Schools" guide. A similar statement will occur in all job descriptions for Positions of Responsibility within the College.

Once employed, a job occupants continuing suitability for child connected work will occur as part of the College's and DET's Performance and Development processes.

Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is a primary concern for the College as is being fair and just to the school's personnel. The decisions made when recruiting, assessing incidents and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent and based on evidence.

The school works to ensure that all allegations of abuse and safety concerns as well as actions taken are appropriately recorded.

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. The College has 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

Staff at Pakenham Secondary College are actively supported to take their legal responsibilities seriously. Our understandings are underpinned by the knowledge that:

- All Victorian Teachers have a legal responsibility to report incidents where children's safety is at risk. Victorian Government School employees are expected to follow the DET Mandatory Reporting policy. Staff at Pakenham Secondary College are expected at, all times, to adhere to the College's Mandatory Reporting Policy as well as the guidelines outlined in the Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures. Staff are provided with appropriate guidance and training to ensure that they meet their obligations.

- 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.
- 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.
- The Principal will notify the Department's Employee Conduct Branch if they become aware of an allegation of "Reportable Conduct".

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, the school proactively manages risks of abuse to our children.

Risk management strategies are 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 social contact with a student on social media).

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Pakenham Secondary College takes all allegations of abuse seriously and has practices in place to investigate this thoroughly and quickly. The school's 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. It is acknowledged that everyone has a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if they have a reasonable belief that an incident took place. The Community has access to the College's Child Safe Policy and Mandatory Reporting Policy on the school's Web Page which also includes information on "Feeling Safe in Secondary School" and "Protecting Children from abuse". This is highlighted to parents at the start of the year through Newsletter articles.

If an adult has formed a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred, it is understood that it must be reported to either a member of the Welfare team or Principal Class who are then expected to inform the relevant authorities. This will involve making reports to DET's Security Services Unit, Department of Human Services and Victoria Police (Sexual Offence and Child Abuse unit). It is expected that the College's "Responding to Suspected Child Abuse" form will also be completed and filed with the General Office.

At our school the Principal will be responsible for monitoring overall school compliance with this procedure. Nothing in this procedure prevents a staff member or any other person from reporting to the relevant authorities if they form a reasonable belief that a child is at risk of abuse.

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

It should be noted that fulfilling the roles and responsibilities contained in the policy does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse.

Students and their families who are identified as being victims of Child Abuse will be supported by the College's welfare team. External support may be organised through agencies such as Child First or South East Centre against Sexual Assault (SECASA).

At the start of each year all staff will be trained in the management of allegations of Child Abuse and what they are expected to do if such a situation arises. Part of this training will also include all members of the College being made aware of their responsibilities as outlined in the school's Mandatory Reporting Policy and the Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy.

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Each year the Pakenham Secondary College School Council and school staff will be supplied with appropriate guidance and training regarding the school's collective and individual obligations for managing the risk of child abuse and the Child Safe standards.

APPENDIX TWO:

Pakenham Secondary College
Child Safety Code of Conduct

Pakenham 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 Pakenham Secondary College will support the implementation and monitoring of the Code of Conduct, and will plan, implement and monitor arrangements to provide inclusive, safe and orderly schools and other learning environments. The Principal and school leaders of Pakenham Secondary College will also provide information and support to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively. This will include making all staff aware of their responsibilities in relation to this Code of Conduct at the start of each school year.

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.

Acceptable behaviours

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 the school's statement of commitment to child safety at all times and adhering to the school's child safe 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.
- 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 leadership team or a member of the Welfare team.
- 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.

Unacceptable behaviours

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 extra-curricular 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 school policy or take illicit drugs under any circumstances.

APPENDIX THREE:

**Pakenham Secondary College
Child Safety Risk Management Program**

At Pakenham Secondary College our child safety risk management strategy is a formal and structured approach to managing risks associated with child safety. Our school's Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct clearly outline our commitment to implementing the 7 standards for child safety as outlined in the Ministerial Order No. 870. These policies are further supported through the Student Engagement and Well-Being policy, Bully Prevention Policy, Mandatory Reporting Policy and Child Safe reporting Obligations Policy.

At Pakenham Secondary College our process includes risk assessments (see matrix below), implementation of controls and a monitoring and review process to ensure the currency of the risk management approach.

Risk Rating Matrix

RISK RATING		Consequence				
		Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
Likelihood	Almost Certain	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
	Likely	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme
	Possible	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme
	Unlikely	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
	Rare	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium

In assessing any risk the Risk Rating Matrix, as shown above, is used. The College's current risk assessment is as outlined in the table below.

Risk Event or Environment	Existing risk management strategies or existing controls	Likelihood	Consequence	Current risk rating	New risk management strategies or treatments	Who is responsible?	Target risk rating
Inappropriate behaviour is not reported and addressed	Child safety code of conduct Clear child safety reporting procedures Performance management procedures	Unlikely	Severe	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies to embed organisational culture of child safety are reviewed Refresher training for staff includes eLearning mandatory reporting module as well as training of staff re the school's Child Safe Policy 	Principal	Low
Long term staff do not have VIT registration or WWCC	VIT and WWCC status is checked annually.	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	Add VIT and WWCC to Inspections checklist.	Principal	Low
Recruitment of an inappropriate person	WWCC or Victorian Institute of Teaching registration	Unlikely	Major	Medium	Processes updated to require: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criminal history search Pre-employment reference check includes asking about child safety 	Principal, School Council Chair	Low

Risk Event or Environment	Existing risk management strategies or existing controls	Likelihood	Consequence	Current risk rating	New risk management strategies or treatments	Who is responsible?	Target risk rating
Engagement with children online	Child safety code of conduct Strategies developed to embed culture of child safety	Possible	Moderate	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train students to be safe in an on-line environment Ensure appropriate settings on all student technologies 	Principal	Low
Unknown people and environments at excursions and camps	Child safety code of conduct Strategies developed to embed culture of child safety Clear child safety reporting procedures	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of new or changed environments for child safety risks Ensure Code and strategies apply in all school contexts 	Principal	Low
Ad-hoc contractors on the premises (eg maintenance)	Child safe environments Information and awareness for visitors, staff, volunteers and contractors Ensure all contractors have been inducted Adequate monitoring	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refresher training for frequent contractors 	Principal	Low

Child Safety Risks and Risk Management Strategies

The list below comprises a listing of potential child safety risk and risk management strategies.

Risks

- Lack of an organisational culture of child safety
- Familiarity breeding a culture of not reporting issues
- Natural trust of long term employees (who may have developed issues over time)
- Children alone with one other person unsupervised
- Recruitment of an inappropriate person
- Inappropriate behaviour not reported
- Harassment via email, SMS or other media
- Unsupervised recreational or other activities
- Ad-hoc contractors on the premises (e.g. maintenance)
- Vulnerability of staff and students due to unknown personal issues
- Unknown people and environments at excursions and camps
- False allegations

Risk Management Strategies

- Implement an effective child safety risk management strategy
- Training of staff in the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- All staff are trained in child safety reporting procedures
- Induction for all visitors, staff, volunteers and contractors
- Train students and staff to detect inappropriate behaviour and apply the relevant policies
- Counselling and other resources
- CCTV for unsupervised areas, and 'hot spot' areas
- Clear windows in walls to enable visibility of occupants
- Non-lockable doors in hot spots
- Assessment of new or changed physical environments for child safety risks
- Correct supervision or monitoring of activities
- Online searches (Google, Facebook etc.)
- Performance management procedures
- Pre-employment reference checks that include checking for child safety
- Criminal history checks and confirming currency of a possible employee's VIT registration

The effectiveness of these Risk Management strategies will be reviewed by the School Council on an annual basis at its last meeting in term 3 of each year.

At Pakenham Secondary College we believe that the implementation of our “Child Safe Policy Incorporating the VRQA Child Safe standards” will enhance the Colleges commitment to safety and well-being of all students who attend our school. Child friendly posters will be displayed on noticeboards around the College as well as the College intranet. They highlight to students who they can approach if they have concerns about themselves or other’s well-being. Further to this the College runs programs that support’s students to be safe on the internet. These programs could be run by the Police (Youth Resource officers) or other experts on Cyber Safety.

The College is keenly aware of its responsibility to promote an inclusive environment that is based on respectful relationships (including sexuality), where all children feel safe and appropriate standards of behaviour are maintained (through the implementation of the school’s Student Engagement and Well-Being Policy). Behaviour management and the implementation of the Student Engagement Policy are supported by:

- Leading Teachers who have overall responsibility of a particular sub-school
- Team Leaders who have responsibility for specific form groups
- A Welfare team who takes overall responsibility for maintaining the well-being of all students and making sure that appropriate programs are put in place that support resilience, respectful relationships and promoting cyber safety.

This policy will be made available to parents and the general community through the College’s website and notifications on Compass at the start of each school year.

Ratified by College Council	February 2019
Review Cycle	2 Year
Review Date	February 2021