



<b>Policy Document Name</b>	<b>Child Safe Policy</b>
<b>Date Ratified by Board of Management</b>	December 2016
<b>Date for Review</b>	December 2017

## 1. PREAMBLE

Oakleigh Grammar has a **zero-tolerance approach to child abuse**. The School must comply with the minimum standard for the care, safety and welfare of students as detailed in the child safe standards specified by Ministerial Order No. 870. Underpinning the information and procedures discussed in this policy is the *Children, Youth and families Act 2005*.

## 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to outline to the Oakleigh Grammar School and community how the School promotes and maintains the safety and welfare of children.

- The Child Safe Policy (the Policy) aims to provide policy guidance to assist the school students, Staff, Contractors, Volunteers and other Stakeholders in maintaining best practice in Child Safety. A key policy outcome is to minimise the risk of harm to children and promote their participation and wellbeing. The Policy also encourages the involvement of everyone in our community to create and maintain a safe, aware and welcoming environment for all.
- The policy should be read in conjunction with the Child Safe Staff Code of Conduct, Mandatory Reporting and the School Community Code of Conduct Policies.

## 3. POLICY GUIDELINES

### 3.1 Policy Scope

The policy and procedures contained in this document apply to all Staff, Contractors and Volunteers in the School.

All School Staff, Contractors and Volunteers must familiarise themselves with this Policy and respond appropriately and in accordance with the provisions of this Policy to concerns of Child Abuse.

Where the student is over the age of 18 and discloses or is the alleged victim of any type of abuse, as outlined in this Policy, the School will provide support to the Student and contact Child Protection or the Police immediately for further investigation.

### 3.2 Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Oakleigh Grammar is committed to child safety. All students have a right to feel safe and to be safe. We want our students to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers. We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our rigorous policies and procedures.

Teachers and employees of the School, have a legal and moral responsibility to respond to situations involving:

- child abuse
- allegations of child abuse
- concern of potential child abuse
- managing the risk of child abuse
- providing support to a child at risk of child abuse and to actively maintain a safe school environment\* both during school hours and outside the school day.

\* The School environment is created by the School community wherever they may be.

Our School is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks. The School is committed to promoting a culture of child safety.

Our School has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers.

Our School is committed to regular professional training of our teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

We are committed to the safety of Aboriginal children, the safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments. The School is committed to undertaking a 12 monthly review of the Child Safe Policy and Procedures, or following any significant incidents if they occur. The Child Safe Policy and Procedures are considered to be dynamic policies that will be continually monitored and improved.

## 4. DEFINITION OF FORMS OF CHILD ABUSE

**4.1 Physical Abuse** – Occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child.

The abuse can take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures. This does not include reasonable discipline, although it may result from excessive or inappropriate discipline.

**4.2 Psychological/Emotional abuse** – Occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected or frightened of threats. The abuse can involve name calling, being put down or continual coldness from a parent or caregiver to the extent where the behaviour of the child is disturbed or their emotional development is at serious risk of being impaired.

**4.3 Neglect** – Occurs when there is a failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, supervision, medical attention or care to the extent that the health, safety, or development of the child is significantly impaired or placed at risk.

**4.4 Sexual Abuse** – Occurs when a child is used by an adult, another child or adolescent for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification. These can be contact or non-contact acts, including grooming by perpetrators, inappropriate touching, penetrative abuse, exposure to pornography and accessing child pornography.

**4.5 Exposure to Domestic Violence** – Occurs when a child witnesses or experiences the chronic domination, coercion, intimidation and victimisation of one person to another by physical, sexual or emotional means within a domestic relationship or in the home environment.

**4.6 Grooming** – Occurs when communication or conduct is linked to the intention of facilitating the involvement of a child in sexual behaviour with an adult, indicators include but are not limited to:

- Developing special relationships with, favouring or giving gifts to a child
- Inappropriate interactions with a child either in person or via forms of media and electronic devices
- Asking a child to keep a secret of any aspect of their relationship

- Testing of or ignoring professional boundaries or rules

Grooming behaviour typically involves a graduation from attention giving and non-sexual touching to increasingly more intimate and intrusive behaviours.

Grooming is not a single act of unprofessional or inappropriate conduct, but rather a pattern of behaviour where the trust of a child is gained and a 'special relationship' is developed between the adult and the child.

Grooming involves making the child feel important and special often by giving the child extra attention, privileges and gifts. In many cases, the child's family is engaged by the adult to gain access to the child outside of school hours and the child is encouraged to see the adult as a friend.

## 5. POLICY DETAILS

### 5.1 Child Safe Officers

Our SLT, consisting of Heads of School and Deputy Principal, are the School's Child Safe Officers. They take the lead in protecting children from abuse and have procedures in place to address child abuse allegations and risks, and take responsibility for ensuring an appropriate response.

If a staff member believes a child is at **immediate risk of abuse** they are to contact the relevant Child Safe Officer (HOS or DP) and collectively make the following call:

1. During office hours contact CHILD FIRST 1300 762 125 (Eastern Metropolitan) for wellbeing/neglect issues
  2. Contact CHILD PROTECTION 1300 360 391 for a child in danger of abuse or significant harm
- Child First / Child Protection will contact police if required.

### 5.2 Our Children

This policy is intended to empower our students who are vital and active participants in our School. We endeavour to 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 tolerance in our School, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

### 5.3 Our teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers

This policy guides our teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers on how to conduct themselves when working with the students in our School.

All of our teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

### 5.4 Training and monitoring of staff

Training in the area of child safety and monitoring of staff is important to ensure that everyone in our School understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all teachers, non-teaching 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 to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers through ongoing observation and feedback to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the safety of Aboriginal children, the safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be inducted, mentored and monitored to ensure they understand our organisation'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 (please refer to the School's '**Child Safe School' Code of Conduct Policy** and **Teaching Staff Code of Conduct Policy** for more details on appropriate behaviour). 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.

## **5.5 Recruitment**

We take all reasonable steps to employ qualified, skilled staff to work with our students. 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 actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers and parents, are required to hold a Working with Children Check or current VIT Registration and to provide documentary evidence.

We carry out a number of checks that include: reference check, identity check; Victorian Institute of Teaching Registration or Working with Children Card 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.

## **5.6 Fair procedures for personnel**

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to our 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 incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored in a child's central file.

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.

## **5.7 Privacy**

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be teachers, non-teaching 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.

## 6. LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

Our organisation 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
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation 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. Provide an environment where the School is aware and monitors the potential for grooming on campus and through social contact.
- **Teachers are mandatory reporters.** If a staff member believes a child is **at immediate risk of abuse** they are to contact the relevant HOS (or DP if unavailable) and collectively make the following call:
  1. During office hours contact CHILD FIRST 1300 762 125 (Eastern Metropolitan) for wellbeing/neglect issues
  2. Contact CHILD PROTECTION 1300 360 391 for a child in danger of abuse or significant harm  
Child First / Child Protection will contact police if required.

## 7. RISK MANAGEMENT

In Victoria, organisations 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.

The School has 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, all doors are lockable and have a window from which to view the internal space) and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a student on personal social media pages).

This policy will be reviewed every year and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and students have the opportunity to contribute. Where appropriate we will work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

## 8. ALLEGATIONS, CONCERNS and COMPLAINTS

The School takes all allegations seriously and has procedures in place to address an allegation or suspicion of child abuse or neglect. Our staff are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, teachers, non-teaching 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.