



Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Purpose:

The Whittlesea Secondary College Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our Colleges commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of our Colleges approach to implementing [Ministerial Order 1359](#) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments. This policy ensures compliance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards (2022), embeds a culture of child safety, and clearly outlines responsibilities for protecting children from abuse, harm and neglect.

It informs our College community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

Scope:

This policy:

- applies to all Whittlesea Secondary College staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with College students. It also applies to Whittlesea school council members where indicated.
- applies in all physical and online College environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided by for a student's use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers
- should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related College policies section below.

Definitions:

Child abuse includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, neglect, grooming and exposure to family violence. Child safety means the protection of children from abuse, harm and neglect.

The following terms in this policy have [specific definitions](#):

- child
- child safety
- child abuse



- child-connected work
- child-related work
- school environment
- school boarding environment
- school staff
- school boarding premises staff
- school governing authority
- school boarding premises governing authority
- student
- volunteer.

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Child Safe Principles:

Whittlesea Secondary College is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families.

We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our College environments.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our College environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of:

- Aboriginal students,
- those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds,
- international students,
- students with disabilities,
- those unable to live at home,
- children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQIA+)
- and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability.



Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our College and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our College has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies. Please see our Child Safe Standards in Appendix 1.

PROTECT – Four Critical Actions for Schools

Whittlesea Secondary College implements the Department of Education PROTECT Four Critical Actions for Schools:

1. Responding to an emergency
2. Reporting to authorities
3. Contacting parents and carers
4. Providing ongoing support

All staff are required to follow the Four Critical Actions where there is a reasonable belief that a child has been abused or is at risk of abuse. If a child is in immediate danger, call 000.

Roles and Responsibilities:

College leadership team

Our College leadership team (comprising the Principal, Assistant Principals, Heads of House, Domain Leaders, Leading Teachers and Learning Specialists) is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

Principals and Assistant Principals will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed
- model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students



- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the College community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of responding to abuse
- create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

College staff and volunteers

All College staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the College or the Department of Education, and always follow the College's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- act in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

Whittlesea Secondary College School Council

In performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, school council members will:

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader College community
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings
- undertake annual training on child safety
- approve updates to, and act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members
- when engaging school council employees, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe.

Specific Whittlesea staff child safety responsibilities

Whittlesea Secondary College has nominated a child safety champions, our Assistant Principal of Engagement and Wellbeing and Assistant Principal of Inclusion and Resources to support the Principal to implement our child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training.



The responsibilities of the child safety champions are outlined at [Guidance for child safety champions](#). In addition to these roles, our child safety champion is also responsible for:

- Inclusion and Resource Management
- Wellbeing and Engagement

Our Principal and child safety champions are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

- Assistant Principal of Inclusion and Resources is responsible for monitoring the Colleges compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Anyone in our College community should approach any of the Principal Team if they have any concerns about the College's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- Assistant Principal of Inclusion and Resources is responsible for informing the College community about this policy, and making it publicly available
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in 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 Child Safety Risk Register.

Our school has also established a Wellbeing Team that address all Wellbeing issues and often deal with child safety. The Wellbeing Team meets regularly to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing.

Whittlesea secondary College also has a Student Reference Group (SRC) which provides an opportunity for students to provide input into College strategies.

Our Principal Team in consultation with the Wellbeing Team monitors the Child Safety Risk Register.

Child Safety Code of Conduct:

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the College.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

Managing Risks to Child Safety and Wellbeing:

At our College we identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online College environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site overnight camps, adventure activities and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.



Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our College leadership team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

Establishing a Culturally Safe Environment:

At Whittlesea Secondary College we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe College where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

We have developed the following strategies to promote cultural safety in our College community:

- Our [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Safety and Action Plan](#) outlines the measures we have in place to maintain an inclusive and culturally safe College for Aboriginal children and students.

Student Empowerment:

To support child safety and wellbeing at Whittlesea Secondary College, we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families/carers to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the College to ensure a sense of belonging through implementing our whole College approach to Respectful Relationships, our student Code of Conduct, our College values as outline in our [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#).

We inform students of their rights through whole College approach to Respectful Relationships and give our students the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers. We ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time. Students and families can email any concerns to whittlesea.sc@education.vic.gov.au.

When the College is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct or abuse of a child, we will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously, check our understanding of the complaint, support the student and keep them (and their parents and carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.



Family Engagement:

Our families and the College community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, at Whittlesea Secondary College we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our College's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

We do this by:

- Seeking input from students/families/carers and local community members via COMPASS, School Council meetings, Student Representative Council, forums and surveys.
- All our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and families/carers in hard copy by request or on our College Website here: [Whittlesea Secondary College Policies](#)
- COMPASS posts will inform families and the College community about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters are displayed across the College and in classrooms.

Diversity and Equity:

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal children and young people
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and young people with disabilities
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- international students
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.



Suitable Staff and Volunteers:

At Whittlesea Secondary College, we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

Staff recruitment

When recruiting staff, we follow the Department of Education's recruitment policies and guidelines, available on the Policy and Advisory Library (PAL) at:

- [Recruitment in Schools](#)
- [Suitability for Employment Checks](#)
- [School Council Employment](#)
- [Contractor OHS Management.](#)

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching registration
- collect and record:
 - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
 - the person's history of working with children
 - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.
 - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

Staff induction

All newly appointed College staff will be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program will include a focus on:

- the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document)
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures and;
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that College Principal team considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

Ongoing supervision and management of College staff

All College staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. College Staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. This will be done via regular performance reviews. Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our College and department policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.



Suitability of volunteers

All volunteers are required to comply with our [Volunteers Policy](#), which describes how we assess the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing induction and training, and supervision and management.

Child Safety knowledge, skills and awareness:

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our staff will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- our school's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices
- completing the [Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#) online module annually
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment.

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing, for example, training for our volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

School Council training and education

To ensure our school council is equipped with the knowledge required to make decisions in the best interests of student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment, the council is trained at least annually. Training includes guidance on:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse
- child safety and wellbeing risks in our College environment
- Whittlesea Secondary College child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices



Complaints and reporting processes:

Whittlesea Secondary College fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the College community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our College's [Complaints Policy](#).

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including school council members must follow our [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy](#) and Procedures. Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, College staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the College.

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant College staff have been informed, we will ensure our school follows:

- the [Four Critical Actions](#) for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child
- Whittlesea Secondary College implements the Department of Education PROTECT Four Critical Actions for Schools:

1. Responding to an emergency
2. Reporting to authorities
3. Contacting parents and carers
4. Providing ongoing support

All staff are required to follow the Four Critical Actions where there is a reasonable belief that a child has been abused or is at risk of abuse.

If a child is in immediate danger, call 000.

- the [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending

Our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and Bullying Prevention Policy cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.



Communications:

Whittlesea Secondary College is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the College community through:

- ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on our website including the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document), Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure
- displaying PROTECT posters around the College
- updates via COMPASS
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings.

Privacy and Information Sharing:

Whittlesea Secondary College collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws. For information on how our school collects, uses and discloses information refer to: [Schools' Privacy Policy](#).

Records Management:

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the Department of Education's policy: [Records Management – School Records](#)

Review of Child Safety Practices:

At Whittlesea Secondary College, we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

- review and improve our policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with College staff and our College community.
- [Bullying Prevention Policy](#)
- [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures](#)
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- [Complaints Policy](#)
- [Digital Learning Policy](#)
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy



- Visitors Policy
- Volunteers Policy

Further Information and Resources:

The Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL):

- [Bullying Prevention and Response Policy](#)
- [Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes](#)
- [Complaints Policy](#)
- [Contractor OHS Management Policy](#)
- [Digital Learning in Schools Policy](#)
- [Family Violence Support](#)
- [Protecting Children: Reporting Obligations Policy](#)
- [Policy and Guidelines for Recruitment in Schools](#)
- [Reportable Conduct Policy](#)
- [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#)
- [Supervision of Students Policy](#)
- [Visitors in Schools Policy](#)
- [Volunteers in Schools Policy](#)
- [Working with Children and other Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors](#)

Other related documents

- [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- [Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools](#)



Policy Review and Approval:

Policy last reviewed	February 2026
Consultation	School Council, Student Representative Council, College Community , College Leadership
Policy approved	School Council April 2026
Next scheduled review date	February 2028



Appendix 1:

Child Safety Standards

Standard 1	Establish a culturally safe environment in which diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children are respected and valued.
Standard 2	Ensure that child safety and wellbeing is embedded in our College leadership, governance and culture.
Standard 3	Children and Young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
Standard 4	Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
Standard 5	Equity is upheld and diverse needs are respected in policy and practice.
Standard 6	People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
Standard 7	Ensure processes for complaints and concerns are child- focussed.
Standard 8	Staff and volunteers are equipped with knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
Standard 9	Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
Standard 10	Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
Standard 11	Policies and procedure document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

PROTECT

Protecting children & young people
from abuse is our responsibility