

Ratified by the Board of Governors on: 15 September 2016

Signed:.....

Review due: September 2018

Chairperson

CHILD SAFE POLICY

1. Rationale

This Child Safe policy is the overarching document that provides an overview of the key elements of Christadelphian Heritage College Melbourne's (CHCM) approach to child safety in accordance with *Ministerial Order No. 870 – Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools*.

2. Purpose

- To clearly state our zero tolerance of child abuse.
- To detail our child safe processes and procedures and links to existing documents that include child safety considerations.
- To clearly state our commitment to cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to provide a safe environment for children with a disability.
- To detail expectations and requirements of staff and volunteers to ensure the protection of children, and the training and support staff receive.
- To include contact details of our Child Safety Officer for people to access information in relation to child safety.
- To include how and when the policy and other child safety tools are reviewed and distributed to help the College continually improve child safety.
- To embed a culture of child safety in the workings and culture of the school.

3. Principles

- **If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.**
- CHCM is committed to child safety.
- We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our 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 robust policies and procedures.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

- CHCM is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- CHCM has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- CHCM is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal 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 have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

4. Scope

Our Children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation. We 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 an understanding of diversity at CHCM, and people from diverse cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

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

Our Staff and Volunteers

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

All of our staff and volunteers must agree 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.

5. Procedure

5.1. Training and Supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture 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. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our 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.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly 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 CHCM's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). 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.

5.2. Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. 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.

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. Please see the College's *Compliance with Working with Children Act 2005 Policy (D4a)* for further information.

We carry out reference 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.

5.3. Fair Procedures for Staff

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to staff. 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 *Mandatory Reporting Report Information Sheet (E1b)*, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

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.

5.4. 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. 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.

5.5. 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.
- Any staff who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

5.6. 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.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical and online environments.

5.7. Allegations, Concerns and Complaints

CHCM takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to respond quickly. Our 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.

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.

5.8. Child Safety Officer

The College's Child Safety Officer is:

Jon Fry (Principal)

Tel: 03 9739 8126

Email: jon.fry@heritage.vic.edu.au

Mr Alan West will be allocated the responsibilities of the Child Safety Officer if the CSO cannot perform his role.

6. Responsibilities

6.1. General implementation

The whole College Community consisting of the Board, Principal (Child Safety Officer), Staff, Volunteers, Parents and Students are responsible for implementing the measures described in this policy.

6.2. Child Safety Officer

The Child Safety Officer is responsible for:

- promptly managing the College's response to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse
- ensuring that the allegation or disclosure is taken seriously
- ensuring that the College's reporting procedures are followed
- supporting or assisting children who disclose an allegation of child abuse or who are linked to or affected by an allegation of child abuse.

6.3. College Board

Compliance will be monitored by regular reporting to the College Board by the Child Safety Officer, and via the Education Committee and the Risk Register.

7. Review Cycle

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children from our school community have the opportunity to contribute, including Aboriginal families, culturally and/or linguistically diverse families and people with a disability who are part of our school community.

8. Related Documents

- Compliance with Working with Children Act 2005 Policy (D4a)
- Mandatory Reporting Report Information Sheet (E1b)
- Risk Register

9. Distribution

- Staff Handbook
- Volunteer Handbook
- Parents Handbook
- College Website
- Board Handbook