



CHILD SAFE POLICY

CHILD SAFE STATEMENT

At Mornington Secondary College we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental expectation of our college. Mornington Secondary College is committed to protecting students from abuse or harm while at school and in our care. Mornington Secondary College's Child Safety Code of Conduct is consistent with the Education Department's recommendation.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/childsafestandards.aspx>

RATIONALE

The Victorian Government and the Mornington Secondary College community are committed to the safety and wellbeing of all students. As part of the Victorian Government's commitment to implementing the recommendations of the *Betrayal of Trust* report, in 2016 there is a regulatory landscape surrounding child safety, underpinned by compulsory [Child Safe Standards](#).

The Child Safe Standards are compulsory minimum standards for all Victorian schools, to ensure they are well prepared to protect students from abuse and neglect.

It is recognised that at Mornington Secondary College we have many policies and procedures already in place which aim to keep students safe. The Child Safe Standards provide a further framework to improve policy and practices around child safety. The school is committed to ongoing improvement in this area.

COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

All students who attend Mornington Secondary College have a right to feel and be safe. The wellbeing of students in our care will always be our first priority and Mornington Secondary College Council and staff have zero tolerance for any, and all, examples of child abuse of any form. We are committed to providing a child safe and friendly environment where students feel safe. This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, students and individuals involved in our organization. To maintain and strengthen Mornington Secondary College as a truly child safe organisation, in which all of the Child Safe Standards apply.

This policy is informed by the content of [Ministerial Order 870](#).

Mornington Secondary College:

- Ensures the Child Safe Policy and the Child Safe Code of Conduct apply to all school staff (including volunteers and contractors), visitors and students' family members with clear behavioural expectations when visiting or working in our school.
- Provides support and supervision so people feel valued, respected and fairly treated.
- Has developed a code of conduct to provide guidance to our staff and volunteers, all of whom receive training on the requirements of the code.
- Applies the best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff and volunteers.
- Conducts referee checks on all staff and volunteers and require working with children checks for all relevant positions. (Note: volunteers who attend Mornington Secondary College's events (for example, presentation days, mock interviews and/or pathways events) in which a teacher is present are exempted from providing a Working with Children Check.)
- Ensures our commitment to child safety and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements. <http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/home/applications/>
- Ensures all visitors, contractors and volunteers sign in at the main office before entering our school site.
- Provides clear advice on the website about what to expect if working with or volunteering at the school
- Includes detailed child safety information on the College website: www.mornsc.vic.edu.au
- Recognises that 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.
- Supports staff and volunteers with 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 or who identify as sexual or gender diverse.
- Recognises the importance of a risk management approach to minimizing the potential for child abuse or harm to occur and use this to inform our policy, procedures and activity planning. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our students.

IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of the Child Safe Standards impacts all aspects of the college's organizational framework and operations. The steps required are outlined in this policy as well as in other, connected policy documents.

Further supporting this Child Safety policy is the college [Safeguarding Students Code of Conduct](#).



PRIVACY

All personal information considered or recorded will be dealt with in accordance with Mornington Secondary College's Privacy Policy and legal obligation.

Legislative responsibilities

- 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 the 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. All members of staff who are designated mandatory notifiers must comply with their duties under the applicable legislation.

REPORTING A CHILD SAFETY CONCERN OR COMPLAINT

Mornington Secondary College takes all allegations and complaints seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. The school's staff are aware of the Mandatory Reporting policy and procedures to deal appropriately with allegations. The school works to ensure all students, families, and staff know what to do as per the School's Child Safety Procedures if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour. All members of the School community, have a responsibility to report an allegation of child abuse as per the school's Child Safe Procedures. If an adult has a reasonable belief that a child abuse or neglect incident has occurred then they must report the incident as per the School's Child Safe procedures.

Factors contributing to reasonable belief may include one or all of the below:

- 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.

Procedures

The principal team and wellbeing counsellors have specific responsibility for responding to any concerns made by staff, volunteers, parents or students. Our procedures for responding to allegations of suspected child abuse are outlined in Mornington Secondary College's Child Safety procedures.



Supporting policies or documents:

- Protection of Children from Sexual Abuse- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/schidsexual.aspx>
- Child Safe Procedures- www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/childsafestandards
- Child safe policy- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/health/Pages/childsafesafe.aspx>
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/childsafestandards.aspx>

Mornington Secondary School relevant policies:

- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Privacy Policy
- Suitability for Employment
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Drug Policy
- Cyberbullying Policy
- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Digital Technologies (internet, social media and digital devices) Policy

KEY DEFINITIONS:

What is Child Abuse?

The child safe standards aim to protect children from abuse in organisations. Under the Act, child abuse includes four categories of abuse as outlined below. While the standards apply specifically to child abuse, organisations should look to promote children's health and wellbeing in a broader sense.

Physical violence

Physical violence occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from a non-accidental injury or injuries inflicted by another person. Physical violence can be inflicted in many ways, including beating, shaking, burning or use of weapons.

Possible physical indicators:

- Unexplained bruises
- Burns and/or fractured bones



Possible behavioural indicators:

- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Wearing long sleeved clothes on hot days (to hide bruising or other injury)
- Fear of specific people
- Unexplained absences
- Academic problems

Sexual offences

Sexual offences occur when a person involves the child in sexual activity, or deliberately puts the child in the presence of sexual behaviours that are exploitative or inappropriate to his/her age and development. Child sexual abuse can involve a range of sexual activity including fondling, masturbation, penetration, voyeurism and exhibitionism. It can also include exposure to or exploitation through pornography or prostitution, as well as grooming behaviour.

Possible physical indicators:

- Presence of sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy
- Vaginal or anal bleeding or discharge

Possible behavioural indicators:

- Displaying sexual behaviour or knowledge that is unusual for the child's age
- Difficulty sleeping
- Being withdrawn
- Complaining of headaches or stomach pains
- Fear of specific people
- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Displaying aggressive behaviour

Serious emotional or psychological abuse

Serious emotional or psychological abuse occurs when harm is inflicted on a child through repeated rejection, isolation, or by threats or violence. It can include derogatory name-calling and put-downs, or persistent and deliberate coldness from a person, to the extent where the behaviour of the child is disturbed or their emotional development is at serious risk of being impaired. Serious emotional or psychological abuse could also result from conduct that exploits a child without necessarily being criminal, such as encouraging a child to engage in inappropriate or risky behaviours.

Possible physical indicators:

- Delays in emotional, mental, or even physical development
- Physical signs of self-harming



Possible behavioural indicators:

- Exhibiting low self-esteem
- Exhibiting high anxiety
- Displaying aggressive or demanding behaviour
- Being withdrawn, passive and/or tearful
- Self-harming

Serious neglect

Serious neglect is the continued failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention or adequate supervision, to the extent that the child's health, safety and/or development is, or is likely to be, jeopardised. Serious neglect can also occur if an adult fails to adequately ensure the safety of a child where the child is exposed to extremely dangerous or life threatening situations.

Possible physical indicators:

- Frequent hunger
- Malnutrition
- Poor hygiene
- Inappropriate clothing

Possible behavioural indicators:

- Stealing food
- Staying at school outside of school hours
- Aggressive behaviour
- Misusing alcohol or drugs
- Academic issues

Further Information about child protection services can be found on the [Department of Health and Human Services website](#)

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was ratified by council on *14th August 2018* and is scheduled for review in *February, 2020*.