



Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Approved: College Board	Date approved: 27 February 2025
Responsible Officer: The Principal	Policy Review Date: Term 4, 2026

1. Rationale:

This policy sets out the key elements of Lyrebird College's approach to ensuring child safety and provides an overarching set of principles that guide the development of College policies and procedures that aim to protect children from abuse and harm.

This policy provides an overview of our school's approach to implementing [Ministerial Order 1359](#) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

2. Scope:

This policy applies to all members of the Lyrebird College Community, including all staff and visitors, eg volunteers, therapists and contractors. It applies to all of the college environments (see definitions) both physical and virtual.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

3. KEY ELEMENTS OF THIS POLICY

3.1 Commitment to child safety

Lyrebird College is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices promoted and heard about decisions that affect their lives. Lyrebird College is committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. We regard our child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously and consistently in accordance with our robust policies and procedures. We commit to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture.

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 school 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 students with disabilities and of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students who are unable to live at home, children of asylum seekers or refugees, international students, students with disabilities, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) 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 school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff and professional experts to inform our ongoing strategies.

Lyrebird College has a zero tolerance for child abuse.

All members of the Lyrebird College community will be given the Child Safety Code of Conduct and have it explained to them in appropriate language so that they are aware of what is **acceptable behaviour** with respect to child safety and child abuse, and what is **unacceptable behaviour** with respect to child safety and child abuse.

3.2 Child Safe Standards

Lyrebird College actively promotes the safety and wellbeing of all students and all school staff are committed to protecting students from abuse or harm in the school environment, in accordance with our legal obligations under ***Ministerial Order No.1359 – Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools.***

3.3 Overarching principles

The College's commitment to child safety is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from harm and abuse.

- all children have the right to be safe
- the welfare and best interests of the child are paramount
- the views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected
- clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Code of Conduct and Duty of Care Policies
- the safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture
- child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our College community
- procedures are in place to screen all staff
- child safety and protection are everyone's responsibility
- child protection training is mandatory for all College Council members, staff and visitors with direct contact with students
- procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the College community
- children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

In its planning, decision-making and operations the College will:

- take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety
- identify and address any potential child safety risks, for example, student groupings will be formed taking into account issues that could arise from a diversity of chronological ages
- value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their safety
- respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount
- provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children
- engage only the most suitable people to work with children and ensure all school staff have a current Working with Children Check or Victorian Institute of Teaching registration
- all staff will complete mandatory reporting professional learning annually
- ensure children know who to talk with or seek help from if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues and feel listened to

- report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities
- share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk
- value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

3.4 Child Information Sharing Scheme

Lyrebird College provides a respectful, safe, positive and supportive school that aims to protect all children and in particular children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. Lyrebird College is committed to the Information Sharing and Family Violence Reform Ministerial Guidelines made under section 41ZA of the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act, ensuring that our organisational policies and practices meet all Information Sharing and Family Violence Reform guidelines inclusive of:

- Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS)
- Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS)
- Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM)

3.5 Key Responsibilities

Position/Roles	Responsibilities
College Board	<p>Ensure Child Safe Standards are implemented, championed, and modelled</p> <p>Develop, review and endorse child safe policies (including this policy) and procedures.</p> <p>Review risks and update the Child Safety and Wellbeing Risk Assessment Register.</p> <p>Ensure a culture of child safety is embedded into all aspects of the College.</p> <p>Oversee performance of Leadership Team's role in relation to child safety.</p> <p>Ensure appropriate resources are made available to allow child safe policies and procedures to be effectively implemented.</p> <p>Ensure all policies, procedures and documents are accessible and easy to understand.</p> <p>Undertake annual training on Child Safety</p>
Leadership Team (Principal and Senior Teacher)	<p>Take practical measures to ensure Child Safe Standards are implemented, championed, modelled and that a strong child protection culture is maintained at the College.</p> <p>Be the first point of contact for raising child protection concerns within the College and coordinate responses to child protection incidents.</p> <p>Develop and implement child safe policies and procedures approved by the College Board.</p> <p>Ensure a review of child safety and wellbeing policies and practices after any significant child safety incident.</p> <p>Develop and implement strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, and ensure that the policies, procedures, and any statements associated with child safety and wellbeing are understood and implemented by all relevant staff and volunteers</p>

	<p>Implement procedures and strategies in accordance with the Child Information Sharing Scheme.</p> <p>Lead the College's child safety culture, including by allocating and coordinating specific roles and responsibilities for child safety within the College.</p> <p>Report on the outcomes of relevant reviews to the governing body, staff, volunteers, the school community, families and students.</p> <p>Oversee staff recruitment and provide induction, training and supports to ensure staff comply with all child safe policies and procedures, and implement strategies.</p> <p>Identify, analyse and reduce risks of child abuse and harm to children.</p> <p>Ensure all policies, procedures and documents are accessible and easy to understand.</p>
All staff (including Contractors, Therapists, Volunteers with direct contact with children)	<p>Be familiar with the content of all child safe policies and procedures and their legal obligations with respect to reporting child abuse.</p> <p>Be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse and raise concerns relating to child abuse with the Leadership Team.</p> <p>Participate in training adapted to the level of child related work undertaken.</p> <p>Implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of all students.</p>
Visitors without contact with children	<p>Contribute to the safety and protection of children.</p> <p>Be familiar with all child safe policies and procedures.</p>

3.6 Our children

This policy is intended to empower children to be vital and active participants in our College. Children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder can be particularly vulnerable and it is fundamental that Lyrebird College supports students to develop their capacity to communicate their needs and build their understanding to involve them in decisions, especially around matters that directly affect them. We listen to what students have to say and know that student behaviour and actions are communication methods enabling staff to value, understand and respect what our students have to say. Children who disclose child abuse or are linked to suspected child abuse will be assisted and supported.

Children are grouped for classes and activities taking into account a range of child safety related factors, including any potential issues that could arise from diversity of chronological age.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our College, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, expression, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- promote the cultural safety, expression, participation and empowerment of Children from culturally and or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally

Families will be made aware of child safety matters and supported, encouraged and enabled to understand, identify and discuss and report child safety matters for the benefit of children.

3.7 Culturally safe environment

Lyrebird College caters for students with high needs disabilities and is committed to ensuring inclusion, diversity and equity for all. At Lyrebird College, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school 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 school community:

Build a strong school culture to support cultural inclusion:

- Begin events and meetings with a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country as a standing agenda item. Use this as an opportunity to pause and reflect or open a discussion.
- Display the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags on school grounds.
- Display signs to Acknowledge Country and Traditional Owners.
- Make Aboriginal voice part of decision making in matters that affect Aboriginal students. Be open to different ways of doing and expressing things.
- Share information about the local Aboriginal community with students, staff, volunteers and families through school newsletters, school assemblies, parent/carer meetings and our parent/carer website portal.
- Lead safety and inclusion for all Aboriginal students and their families. Learn more about Aboriginal histories and cultures, both locally and across Australia. Speak with respect and confidence about Aboriginal culture, knowledge systems and people.
- Build schoolwide knowledge of Aboriginal histories, cultures, perspectives, values, skills and attitudes.

Provide a welcoming environment for Aboriginal children:

- Acknowledge and draw on the existing knowledge of Aboriginal students and their families.
- Ask for feedback from Aboriginal students and their families about what the school does well, and what can be improved.
- Implement the [Koorie Education Policy](#) to create a learning environment for all students that acknowledges, respects and values Aboriginal cultures and identities (Government schools). Including:
 - working in partnership with the local Koorie community to develop place-based approaches to improving student outcomes
 - support the development of high expectations and individualised learning for Koorie students
 - ensure all Koorie students have an individual education plan
 - create a learning environment for all students that acknowledges, respects and values Koorie cultures and identities
 - view success for their Koorie students as core business
- Use the [Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026](#) to guide the school's support for Aboriginal self-determination.

Actively address racism:

- Express zero tolerance of racism in our statement of commitment to child safety included and as part of our Child Safety and Wellbeing.

- Address racism from students, staff, volunteers, or visitors directly. Make sure racist speech or actions are always dealt with, and the culture of the school works to prevent incidents from occurring.
- Put school leaders at the front of anti-racist action. Discuss racism and work to address unconscious bias and racism in the school community.
- Encourage non-Aboriginal school leaders and teachers to commit to ways they can work as an effective ally to Aboriginal students, their families, and communities.

Guide and train staff and volunteers:

- Train staff and volunteers to understand the importance of Aboriginal culture to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal students.
- Work with the local Aboriginal community to build staff, volunteer and student knowledge and respect for Aboriginal culture and to promote cultural inclusion.
- Arrange [Community Understanding Safety Training \(CUST\)](#) or equivalent for staff.

Build knowledge of Aboriginal culture in school planning and curriculum:

- Find out about the Traditional Owners of the land/s where the school is situated at the [Map of Indigenous Australia](#) and learn about the importance of [acknowledging Traditional Owners](#).
- Include Aboriginal history and culture in professional learning for staff and volunteers and in curriculum planning for students.
- Develop a resource bank of digital, hardcopy print and other artefacts that support the inclusion of Aboriginal content across the curriculum.

Partner with Aboriginal communities:

- Support local Aboriginal businesses through school procurement.
- Engage with local Aboriginal communities via Traditional Owner groups, corporations, or the Registered Aboriginal Party to review cultural safety in school environment, systems, and processes.
- Engage with the Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (LAECG) and/or the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI).

Review and assess how the school supports cultural inclusion:

- Use the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency [cultural safety continuum reflective tool](#) to make a tailored learning and development plan focused on staff cultural competence learning needs.
- Work towards developing and implementing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reconciliation Action Plan.

Recognise key events and anniversaries including:

- 2008 National Apology to the Stolen Generations - 13 February
- Harmony Day - 21 March
- Sorry Day and Anniversary the 2017 Uluru Statement of the Heart - 26 May
- Reconciliation Week - 27 May to 3 June
- NAIDOC week - First week of July
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day - 4 August.

3.8 Staff

This policy guides our staff (which includes external providers and contractors) on how to behave with children in the College community.

All our staff must agree to abide by our Code of Conduct which specifies the standards and conduct required when working with children and the additional requirements of working with children with

Autism Spectrum Disorder. The Code of Conduct lists explicit examples of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours and legislative requirements. All staff, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Code of Conduct.

3.9 Volunteers

This policy guides our use of volunteers within the school community and provides volunteers with information on how to behave within the school setting. All volunteers must agree to abide by our Code of Conduct which specifies the standards and conduct required when working with children and the additional requirements of working with children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The Code of Conduct lists explicit examples of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours and legislative requirements.

Volunteers undertaking child related work must be supervised by a registered teacher and or member of the leadership team. Volunteers will undertake modified child safe training in correlation to the type of work they will undertake onsite and are expected to always uphold equity and respect the diverse needs of our students.

3.10 Family engagement

Our families and the school 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 Lyrebird College we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school'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 ensuring:

- all of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents at the school office and can be emailed upon request
- Newsletters will inform families and the school community about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety
- Families and the school community have a say in the development and review of child safety and wellbeing policies and practices
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school
- Information sessions on our whole school approach (SoSafe) program will be delivered annually for parents and carers.

3.11 Student Empowerment

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

Respectful relationships between students are explicitly taught and reinforced. We encourage the development of peer interactions, friendships and peer support in the school to promote social capabilities and to ensure a sense of belonging. The School Wide Positive Behaviour Support Framework is implemented, in conjunction with our So Safe program, student Code of Conduct and our school values.

We explicitly teach students personal safety and give them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up (communication through preferred method including AAC) 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 also access information on how to report concerns via our [Parent Portal](#) on the college website or by contacting the school office on 9112 8344.

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.

Additional ways our school empowers children and students include but are not limited to:

- explicitly teach and inform students about their rights, including their rights to safety, information and participation
- to develop a culture that encourages participation and responds to what students say, knowing behaviour is communication and must be acknowledged and responded to
- give students opportunities to participate, and respond to their contributions to strengthen confidence and engagement
- give students a variety of communication methods to raise concerns
- recognise the importance of connection with others and encourage support from peers, to help students feel safe and be less isolated
- display posters acknowledging inclusion and diversity
- identify safe spaces where students can go when they need support
- implement weekly social, emotional and wellbeing lessons in classrooms
- use school transition programs to provide supports for students entering, exiting and moving through the school
- make sure staff and volunteers:
 - are attuned to [signs of harm](#) and risk factors, especially as it relates to students with significant disabilities
 - facilitate ways for students to communicate their needs and ideas, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns
- educate staff about Aboriginal culture, safety and respect
- communicate with students in a developmentally appropriate and respectful way
- develop curriculum planning documents or other documentation that details how the school will address these requirements.

3.12 Governance (College Board)

This policy, inclusive of all the College's child safety policy, guides the College Board to oversee the child safe standards and to ensure that all policies and procedures are in place, compliant, actioned, and championed. All members of the College Board must abide by our Code of Conduct and support the promotion of inclusive and culturally safe environments ensure our College Board 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 the Board actively participates in workshops and discussion on Child Safety

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

- champion and promote a child safe culture within the broader school community

- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at Board meetings [**Note** It is not necessary to discuss child safety at every Board meeting, but child safety should be discussed at some meetings to ensure that a culture of child safety is being embedded and school board members are informed and understand the issues]
- ensure Board meeting minutes record the outcomes of relevant reviews and reporting to staff, volunteers, the school communities, families and students is undertaken by the College Principal
- undertake annual training on child safety, using the Child Safe Standards School Council Training slide presentation available on [PROTECT](#)
- participate in an annual Child Safety Workshop presented by the College Principal and teaching staff
- approve updates to, and act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to College Board employees and members
- when hiring, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe. At Lyrebird College, the College Board employment duties are delegated to the principal who is bound by this policy.

3.13 Training and supervision

Training and education are important to ensure that the staff, therapists, contractors and volunteers at Lyrebird College understand that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

The College's organisational culture aims for all staff, (which includes volunteers and contractors), in addition to parents/carers and children, to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. Staff are trained annually to identify, assess and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

School staff and volunteers engaged in child connected work receive annual training and information on child safety that includes guidance on:

- the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- the school's procedures for responding to complaints and concerns relating to child abuse
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children, students, or adults (including family violence)
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- building culturally safe environments
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in physical and online environments without compromising a child or student's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities
- Students, families and volunteers are encouraged and promoted to provide input to our child safe policies and practices

Volunteers will receive training adapted to an appropriate level in respect to their responsibilities as a volunteer and in consideration of the degree of child related work undertaken.

In addition to the training and information sharing to staff and volunteers the college employs a range of additional measure to keep students safe and to promote a child safety college as a community responsibility.

Provisions include:

- Daily room checks by the college principal walking through the school and checking all rooms and buildings unannounced. Room checks are recorded in a daily log.

- Supervision of volunteers and external providers by line of sight from class teachers and leadership members.
- Whole school CCTV and review of CCTV footage where required.
- Whole staff monitoring by school psychologist and ABA therapist through frequent access to rooms and student teaching sessions.

We provide educational programs to children and parents/carers to support, encourage and enable them to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters. We recognise the special situation that children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder and their families find themselves in with respect to child safety and vulnerability to child abuse.

Lyrebird College has developed a set of Child Safe Human Resource Practices specific to Lyrebird College to ensure our staff have opportunities to develop and maintain skills to ensure child safety at the College. Lyrebird College supports our staff through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability or who are vulnerable.

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 (refer to College Code of Conduct). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through the proper channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection Service (DHHS) and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

3.14 Staff recruitment

Lyrebird College has developed a set of Child Safe Recruitment Practices that Lyrebird College follows when recruiting and selecting staff to work at the College.

Lyrebird College takes all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with our students. Selection criteria and advertisements are developed to clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Lyrebird College understands that when recruiting staff, ethical as well as legislative obligations exist.

Applications are encouraged from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and provide evidence of this Check (see Working with Children Check website; <https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/>).

Reference checks and police record checks are carried out to ensure that the right people are recruited. Police record checks are used only for the purpose of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. Some records are retained (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected the decision making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

Persons applying for a role as a teacher with Lyrebird College must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

Once engaged, workers/volunteers must review and acknowledge their understanding of this policy.

3.15 Fair procedures for personnel

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

abuse and safety concerns are recorded using the College's incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored. If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, updates are provided to children and families on progress and any actions the College takes.

3.16 Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, visitors, parents of children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. Lyrebird College has safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles contained in the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth). Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will access to it.

Further information about privacy can be found in the College's Privacy Policy, which is publicly available.

3.17 Risk reduction and management

Lyrebird College proactively manages the risk of abuse to our children in addition to managing occupational health and safety risks.

Lyrebird College has a documented approach to prevent, detect and respond to child safety risks, which involves the implementation of a child safe risk reduction and management framework developed for use by the College Board, Principal and all College staff. This includes child abuse risks, as well as risks of harm to children that arise in the physical school environment and online environments. A risk assessment register is maintained to identify and address risks and to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions the College takes to reduce or remove risks to child safety.

3.18 Allegations, concerns and complaints

Lyrebird College has detailed procedures for responding to allegations, concerns and complaints related to child safety. These are documented in the College's Policy and Procedures for Responding to Suspected Child Abuse, which are publicly available. Lyrebird College takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Staff are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

The College works to ensure all children, families, staff know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour. The College community has a shared responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if there is a reasonable belief that an incident took place.

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***

* When working with students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder their behaviour can be vital in understanding how they are trying to communicate. In many instances, behaviour can equal communication, given that some of our students may not have the capacity to communicate in the verbal sense; through understanding behaviour, monitoring behaviour and patterning behaviour we increase pathways and opportunities for student safety and support.

In situations where the Principal is suspected of involvement in the activity, or if the person having the suspicion does not believe that the matter is being appropriately addressed or dealt with, the matter should be reported to the next highest level of supervision, namely, the Chair of the College Board.

The College is obligated to report to the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) any charges, committals for trial or convictions in relation to a sexual offence by a registered teacher, or certain allegations or concerns about a registered teacher.

3.19 Investigating

If the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) or Victoria Police decide to conduct an investigation of a report, all employees, contractors or volunteers must cooperate fully with the investigation.

The Principal may consult with the authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate. If it is decided that an investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the Principal may decide to conduct an investigation. All employees, therapists, contractors and volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Any such investigation by the Principal will be conducted according to the rules of natural justice.

The Principal will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other members of staff may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.

After an initial review and a determination that the suspected abuse warrants additional investigation, the Principal shall coordinate the investigation with the appropriate investigators and / or law enforcement officials. Internal or external legal representatives will be involved in the process, as deemed appropriate.

3.20 Responding

As part of its duty of care the College will provide professional support for any student impacted by abuse.

If it is alleged that a member of staff, therapist, contractor or a volunteer or other visitor may have committed an offence or have breached the College's policies or its Code of Conduct, the person concerned may be stood down (with pay, where applicable) while an investigation is conducted.

If the investigation concludes that on the balance of probabilities an offence (or a breach of the College's policies or Code of Conduct) has occurred then disciplinary action may follow, up to and including dismissal or cessation of involvement with the organisation. The findings of the investigation will also be reported to any external and governing body as required.

3.21 Records

All reports made to external authorities, such as the Department of Health and Human Services, Victoria Police or the Commission of Children and Young People, will be recorded in accordance with the College's Policy and Procedures for Responding to Suspected Child Abuse.

All records or reports about suspected or alleged child abuse and inappropriate behaviour will be retained by the Principal (or Chair of the College Board, if made about the Principal) in a separate, confidential and secure file.

Child safety and wellbeing records will be created, maintained and disposed of in accordance with Public Record Office Victoria recordkeeping Standards, including minimum retention periods.

3.22 Evaluation and review

This policy and all other Child Safe policies will be thoroughly reviewed every two years. A sub-committee will be formed annually to evaluate current child safe practices and complete a review of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Risk Assessment Register to be approved by the Board. The school community will be informed of the review by the college board.

If guidelines change or following a reportable incident all policies will undergo an immediate review

Families and children will have the opportunity to contribute to the review of this policy. Where possible Lyrebird College will do its best to work with the local Aboriginal communities, linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability. Recent editions of 'A Guide for Creating a Safe Organisation' and 'Safety of Children with a Disability- Child Safe Organisations' produced by the Commission for Children and Young People will be used as references for consideration and improvement.

Annual planning processes will consider the following questions:

Was anything missed the first time around?

Is the approach adopted still the best one?

Have the activities provided changed?

How will the specific needs identified of our students be included?

How will the specific needs identified by our parent and community consultation be included?

What can Lyrebird College learn from successes and mistakes?

3.23 Communication

All members of the College community will be made aware of this policy and other child safe policies in the College's commitment to child safety. Parents and community members will have opportunities to contribute to our policies through Principal meetings where personal consultation about their child's needs and safety can be discussed confidentially. Consultations will provide opportunities for parents to review our policies and provide input and feedback. The annual and biannual Child Safety review undertaken by the College Board and Child Safety sub-committee will report their review to the school community via a letter.

This policy will be publicly available on the College's website and communicated in the college's newsletters, in information sessions, at staff meetings, during recruitment and staff induction, during Board induction and during the enrolment process.

The principal will provide information and invite feedback from the school community once per term via the school newsletter.

All other Child Safe policies will be made digitally available to community members upon request. A hard copy of Child Safe policies will be visibly available in the office for parent access.

3.24 Definitions

Child means a person below the age of 18 years. Ministerial Order 1359 further defines a child as a student enrolled at the school.

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 protection means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.

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.

Child abuse includes;

- (a) any act committed against a child involving
 - (i) a sexual offence; or
 - (ii) an offence under section 49B (2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming); and
- (b) the infliction, on a child, of
 - (i) physical violence; or
 - (ii) serious emotional or psychological harm; and

- (c) serious neglect of a child.

Reasonable grounds for belief is a belief based on reasonable grounds that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively assessed. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

- (a) The child is in need of protection,
- (b) The child has suffered or is likely to suffer “significant harm as a result of physical injury”,
- (c) The parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

A ‘reasonable belief’ or a ‘belief on reasonable grounds’ is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

A ‘reasonable belief’ is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a ‘reasonable belief’ might be formed if:

- (a) A child states that they have been physically or sexually abused;
- (b) A child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);
- (c) Someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused;
- (d) Professional observations of the child’s behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused; and/or
- (e) Signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the College Board for use by a child during or outside school hours, including;

- (a) A campus of the College;
- (b) Online school environments (including email and intranet systems); and
- (c) Other locations provided by the school for a child’s use (including, without limitations, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, work experience, homestay accommodation, and other events.)

Staff means an individual working in the College environment who is:

- (a) directly engaged or employed by the Board or the Principal
- (b) a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)
- (c) a minister of religion

3.25 Related Documents

- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Policy and Procedures for Responding to Suspected Child Abuse
- External Providers Policy
- Duty of Care Policy

- Records Management Policy

3.26 Related Legislation

Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)

- Victorian Government Ministerial Order 1359: Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic)
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic)

- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)*
- *Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)*
- *Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)*

3.27 Evaluation

This policy is to be reviewed as part of a two-year cycle or immediately after any incidents of concern.



Melissa Handbury
Board Chair