

# Child Safe Standard 2: Child Safety Policy



## PURPOSE

Pakenham Secondary College's Child Safety Policy demonstrates our school's 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 school's approach to implementing [Ministerial Order 1359](#) (PDF, 363KB) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments. It informs our school 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 school staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to school council members where indicated.
- applies in all physical and online school 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 school policies section below.

## Definitions

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

Pakenham Secondary College is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making. The school approach to creating and maintaining a child safe school environment is guided by our [‘Statement of Values and School Philosophy.’](#) It is underpinned by the acronym SOAR.

### Social and Personal Responsibility

*Everyone is accountable for their actions and needs to share responsibility for the development of a positive learning environment.*

### Opportunities for All

*All members of the school community are provided with a variety of learning opportunities in order to support their own development.*

### Achieving Personal Best

*There is an expectation that all members of the school community commit to a culture of excellence.*

### Respect and Relationships

The school recognises the importance of productive relationships, with all members of the school community showing respect for themselves, others and the environment.

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 school 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 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 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 (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.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our school 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.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **School leadership team**

Our school leadership team (comprising the principal, assistant principal and leading teachers) 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 school 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.

### **School staff and volunteers**

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school or the Department of Education and Training, and always follow the school'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.

### **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 school community
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings
- undertake annual training on child safety, NOTE: school councils can use the Child Safe Standards School Council Training slide presentation available on [PROTECT](#).
- 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 hiring school council employees, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe. "At our school, school council employment duties are delegated to the principal who is bound by this policy".

## **Specific staff child safety responsibilities**

Pakenham Secondary College has nominated a child safety champion to support the principal to implement our child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training.

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

- Student Engagement and Wellbeing

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

- The Principal is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Anyone in our school community should approach him if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- The Principal is responsible for informing the school 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 Child Safety and Wellbeing Team and a Student Reference Group on child safety. The Child Safety and Wellbeing Team meet regularly to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing. The Student Reference Group provides an opportunity for students to provide input into school strategies.

Our Risk Management Committee monitors the Child Safety Risk Register.

## **Child Safe 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 school.

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

## **Managing Risks to child safety and wellbeing**

At our school we identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school 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 school 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 Pakenham Secondary 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:

Pakenham Secondary College encourages and actively supports our student's ability to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights in the following ways:

- equip staff, students, volunteers and the school community to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and students
- adopt measures to ensure racism is identified, confronted and not tolerated
- address any instances of racism within the school environment with appropriate consequences
- actively support participation and inclusion in the school by Aboriginal children, students and their families
- ensure school policies, procedures, systems and processes together create a culturally safe and inclusive environment and meet the needs of Aboriginal children, students and their families
- develop and endorse a policy or statement detailing the strategies and actions the school will take.

## **Student Empowerment**

To support child safety and wellbeing at Pakenham Secondary 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 reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the school to ensure a sense of belonging by, implementing our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships, our student Code of Conduct, our school values.

We inform students of their rights through our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships and give them 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 also access information on how to report concerns at any time by contacting the General Office.

When the school 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.

The school will promote the Child Safe Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children, including:

- All of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for the students and parents at Pakenham Secondary College to read on the Pakenham Secondary College website under “Policies.”
- PROTECT Child Safety posters are displayed across the school
- School newsletter will inform students and the school community about the school’s commitment to child safety, and strategies or initiatives that the school is taking to ensure student safety

### **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 Pakenham Secondary 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:

- seeking feedback via our school portal, Compass
- procedures will be available for students and parents at on the College Website or via hardcopy from the General Office.
- The College Newsletters and/or Compass Feeds 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.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters are displayed across all areas of the school

### **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 Pakenham 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 and Training'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 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 school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

### **Ongoing supervision and management of staff**

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

Staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. This will be done by conducting regular performance reviews.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our school 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 school environment
- Pakenham Secondary College child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices

## **Complaints and reporting processes**

Pakenham Secondary College fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school 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 school's Complaint Policy. The Complaints Policy can be found on the School Website.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including school council employees) 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, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school.

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school 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
- 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**

Pakenham Secondary College is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school 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 around the school
- updates in our school newsletter and also 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**

Pakenham 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 and Training's policy: [Records Management – School Records](#)

### **Review of child safety practices**

At Pakenham 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 school staff and our school community.

### **Related policies and procedures**

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related school policies, procedures, and codes. These include our:

- 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

#### **Related Department of Education and Training policies**

- [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](#)

#### **Child safety principles**

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

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
7. Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such concerns;
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

## **POLICY**

### **Strategies to embed a child safe culture**

Pakenham Secondary College's culture encourages staff, students, parents and the school community to raise, discuss and scrutinise child safety concerns. This makes it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

All child safety documents, including this policy; Our Commitment to Child Safety (Appendix 1), the Child Safety code of Conduct (Appendix 2), the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures ([Child Safety Reporting Obligations](#)), [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#) and the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) are readily available from the Front Office for all staff and students to read at any time.

Child safety is everyone's responsibility. **All School staff** are required to:

- Act in accordance with the school's child Safety code of Conduct, which clearly sets out the difference between appropriate and in appropriate behaviour
- Act in accordance with the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and procedures at all times, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) where necessary
- Undertake annual guidance and training on child safety
- Act in accordance with their legal obligations, including:
  - Failure to disclose offence (applies to all adults)
  - Duty of care (applies to all school staff)
  - Mandatory reporting obligations (applies to all mandatory reporters, including teachers, principals, registered psychologists, and registered doctors and nurses)
  - Failure to protect offence (applies to a person in a position of authority within the school)
  - Reportable conduct obligations (applies to all school staff in reporting conduct to the principal, and applies to the principal in reporting to Employee Conduct Branch)
  - Organisational duty of care (applies to the school as an organisation)
  - For more information on these obligations, see [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#).

As part of Pakenham Secondary College's child safe culture, **school leadership** (including the principal and assistant principals will:

- Consider the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable, when implementing the Child Safe Standards
- Ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings.
- Encourage and enable staff professional learning and training to build deeper understandings of child safety and prevention of abuse
- Ensure that no one is prohibited or discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to a person external to the school or from making records of any allegations.

As part of Pakenham Secondary College's child safe culture, school **mandatory reporting staff** are required to:

- Complete the [Protecting Children – Mandatory reporting and other obligations](#) online module every year.
- Read the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document
- Read the schools' Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document
- Read the school's Child Safety Policy (this document) on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document.

As part of Pakenham Secondary College's child safe culture, in performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, **school councils and school council members** will:

- Ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings.
- Consider the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable, when making decisions regarding the Child Safe Standards.
- Undertake annual guidance and training on child safety, such as the [Child Safe Standards School Council Training PowerPoint](#).
- Approve the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members, and if updated, note the new document in its school council meeting minutes.
- When hiring employees, ensure that selection, supervision and management practices are child safe.

School leadership will maintain records of the above processes.

The school will use its health and wellbeing programs to delivery appropriate education to its students about:

- Standards of behaviour for students attending school;
- Healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality);
- Resilience;
- Child abuse awareness and prevention
- Being eSmart

### **Confidentiality and privacy**

This school collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law. The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the Department of Education and Training's [Schools' Privacy Policy](#).

## **APPENDIX ONE:**

### **Pakenham Secondary College Our Commitment to Child Safety**

Pakenham Secondary College is committed to child safety. We want children who attend our College to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.

As a school we are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children and have zero tolerance of child abuse. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our and the Department of Education and Training's robust policies and procedures. Employees are supported to ensure they meet their legal and moral obligation to contact authorities when concern is raised about a child's safety.

The College is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, with a view to removing and reducing these risks. We have robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers and are committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

The College supports and respects all children regardless of their background and we have specific policies, procedures and training in place that will support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

*Staff are aware that if a child is at immediate risk of abuse then the staff member should dial "000"*

#### **Our children**

This policy is intended to empower all children who we see as vital and active participants in our school. They are involved when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We work to promote diversity and acceptance in our school to ensure that all people are treated with respect; we challenge homophobic, sexist, or racist comments made about students, parents and teachers. We support the safety, participation and empowerment of all students regardless of race, gender and cultural or family background.

#### **Our staff and volunteers**

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

All of our staff and volunteers are required 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.

#### **Training and supervision**

Each year staff are trained to identify, assess and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse. This training is also extended to each member of the School Council.

Additionally Every year all staff are expected to complete the on-line training module on Mandatory Reporting and other Child Safety obligations.

The College also supports 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. At Pakenham Secondary College this is further supported by allocating Positions of Responsibility to

oversee the PSD program as well as the Marrung Strategy. Further to this, Cultural Liaison Officers are used to support students who come from a background other than English.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school'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 as per the code of conduct outlined in Appendix 2 of this Policy. (also refer to the school's Student Engagement and Well-Being Policy as well as It Values and Vision Policy to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour is reported to the appropriate authorities, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

### **Recruitment**

All reasonable steps are undertaken to employ skilled people to work with children and successful applicants for all positions will be expected to show proof of identity, proof of qualifications, and either have VIT registration or a Working With Children Check. Selection criteria and advertisements are developed which clearly demonstrate the School's commitment to child safety. Our school understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations to ensure a Child Safe environment.

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. The [Working with Children Check](#) website can be accessed for further information. When recruiting staff to the school, reference checks and police record checks are undertaken through the VIT registration process to ensure that the right people are being recruited.

All positions advertised through Recruitment-on-Line (ROL) will include the standard "Child Safe Environments" clause as provided in the "Recruitment in Schools" guide. A similar statement will occur in all job descriptions for Positions of Responsibility within the College.

Once employed, a job occupants continuing suitability for child connected work will occur as part of the College's and DET's Performance and Development processes.

### **Fair procedures for personnel**

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

The school works to ensure that all allegations of abuse and safety concerns as well as actions taken are appropriately recorded.

### **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. The College has 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.

### **Legislative responsibilities**

Staff at Pakenham Secondary College are actively supported to take their legal responsibilities seriously. Our understandings are underpinned by the knowledge that:

- All Victorian Teachers have a legal responsibility to report incidents where children's safety is at risk. Victorian Government School employees are expected to follow the DET Mandatory

Reporting policy. Staff at Pakenham Secondary College are expected at, all times, to adhere to the Mandatory Reporting guidelines outlined in the Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures. Staff are provided with appropriate guidance and training to ensure that they meet their obligations.

- 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.
- People of authority in our 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.
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.
- The Principal will notify the Department's Employee Conduct Branch if they become aware of an allegation of "Reportable Conduct".

### **Risk management**

In Victoria, schools 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, the school proactively manages risks of abuse to our children.

Risk management strategies are in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have social contact with a student on social media).

### **Allegations, concerns and complaints**

Pakenham Secondary College takes all allegations of abuse seriously and has practices in place to investigate this thoroughly and quickly. The school's 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. It is acknowledged that everyone has a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if they have a reasonable belief that an incident took place. The Community has access to the College's Child Safe Policy and Mandatory Reporting Policy on the school's Web Page which also includes information on "Feeling Safe in Secondary School" and "Protecting Children from abuse". This is highlighted to parents at the start of the year through Newsletter articles.

If an adult has formed a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred, it is understood that it must be reported to either a member of the Welfare team or Principal Class who are then expected to inform the relevant authorities. This will involve making reports to DET's Security Services Unit, Department of Human Services and Victoria Police (Sexual Offence and Child Abuse unit). It is expected that the College's "Responding to Suspected Child Abuse" form will also be completed and filed with the General Office.

At our school the Principal will be responsible for monitoring overall school compliance with this procedure. Nothing in this procedure prevents a staff member or any other person from reporting to the relevant authorities if they form a reasonable belief that a child is at risk of abuse.

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

It should be noted that fulfilling the roles and responsibilities contained in the policy does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse.

Students and their families who are identified as being victims of Child Abuse will be supported by the College's welfare team. External support may be organised through agencies such as Child First or South East Centre against Sexual Assault (SECASA).

At the start of each year all staff will be trained in the management of allegations of Child Abuse and what they are expected to do if such a situation arises. Part of this training will also include all members of the College being made aware of their responsibilities as outlined in the school's Mandatory Reporting Policy and the Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy.

### **Regular review**

This policy will be reviewed every three years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Each year the Pakenham Secondary College School Council and school staff will be supplied with appropriate guidance and training regarding the school's collective and individual obligations for managing the risk of child abuse and the Child Safe standards.



## **APPENDIX TWO:**

### **Pakenham Secondary College**

#### **Child Safety Code of Conduct**

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets out the expected behaviour of adults with children and young people in our school.

All Pakenham Secondary College staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, school council members and any other adult involved in child-connected work must follow the Child Safety Code of Conduct.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct applies to all physical and online environments used by students. It also applies during or outside of school hours and in other locations provided by the school for student use (for example, a school camp).

#### **Acceptable behaviours**

At Pakenham Secondary College, staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-connected work, we are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- Upholding the school's commitment to child safety at all times and adhering to our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- treating students and families in our school community with respect in our school environment and outside our school environment as part of normal social and community activities
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they disclose that they or another child or student has been abused or are worried about their safety or the safety of another child or student
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students, students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with a disability, international students, students who are unable to live at home and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTIQ+) students
- ensuring, as far as practicable, that adults are not alone with a student – one-to-one interactions between an adult and a student are to be in an open space or in line of sight of another adult.
- reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the Principal and/or Child Safety Champion
- understanding and complying with all reporting and disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) in line with our child safety responding and reporting policy and procedures and the [PROTECT Four Critical Actions](#).
- if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.

### **Unacceptable behaviours**

As Pakenham Secondary College, staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-connected work we must not:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse or harm
- develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, offering gifts)
- display behaviours or engage with students in ways that are not justified by the educational or professional context
- ignore an adult's overly familiar or inappropriate behaviour towards a student
- discuss intimate topics or use sexualised language, except when needed to deliver the school curriculum or professional guidance
- treat a child or student unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity
- communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to schoolwork or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter
- photograph or video a child or student in a school environment except in accordance with the [Photographing, Filming and Recording Students policy](#) or where required for duty of care purposes
- consume alcohol against school policy or take illicit drugs in the school environment or at school events where students are present
- have contact with any student outside of school hours except when needed to deliver the school curriculum or professional guidance and parental permission has been sought.

### **Breaches to the Child Safety Code of Conduct**

All Pakenham Secondary College staff, volunteers, contractors and any other member of the school community involved in child-connected work who breach this Child Safety Code of Conduct may be subject to disciplinary procedures in accordance with their employment agreement or relevant industrial instrument, professional code or terms of engagement.

In instances where a reportable allegation has been made, the matter will be managed in accordance with the Department of Education and Training Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy and may be subject to referral to Victoria Police.

All breaches and suspected breaches of the Pakenham Secondary College Child Safety Code of Conduct must be reported to the principal and Child Safety Champion at 1020 Princes Highway, Pakenham 3810.

If the breach or suspected breach relates to the principal, contact the Regional Director at South Eastern Victorian Region.