



## Child Safe Standard 2: Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

### Purpose

The Heathmont College Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy sets out the school's commitment and approach to creating and maintaining a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe and provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

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 staff, volunteers, and contractors in the school environment, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people. This policy also applies to school council members where indicated.
- Should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related school policies section below.

This policy will apply to all physical and online school environments (see Definitions section) used by students both during school hours and outside of school hours.

### Definitions

#### ***Child abuse***

Child abuse includes:

- any act committed against a child involving:
  - a sexual offence; or
  - grooming; and
- the infliction, on a child, of:
  - physical violence; or
  - serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- serious neglect of a child.

#### ***Child-connected work***

Child-connected work means work authorised by the school, school council, or Secretary of the Department of Education and Training and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

#### ***Child safety***

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.

### **School environment**

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

- a campus of the school;
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems); and
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, homestays, and other school activities or events)

### **School staff**

School staff means an individual working in a school environment who is:

- employed by the Department of Education and Training;
- directly engaged or employed by a school council; or
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary).

All School 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.

### **STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY AND CHILD SAFETY PRINCIPLES**

Heathmont College is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

Heathmont College is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks. Heathmont College has zero tolerance for all forms of child abuse. We actively work towards protecting children, responding to allegations and empowering children and staff to deal with the issues. We are committed to promoting safety for all children by engendering an atmosphere of respect, trust and care. Heathmont College's commitment to child safety and wellbeing includes all students whilst participating in school activities both during and outside school hours. This includes activities conducted outside of the school environment such as excursions, camps and sporting events, as well as within online school environments including video conferencing platforms such as WebEx and Microsoft Teams, email and other web-based communication programs. Heathmont College recognises that the wellbeing of students is the responsibility of all staff and that staff must report and respond to any concerns regarding possible sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect of a child in accordance with the relevant policies and procedures.

We are committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, procedures, strategies and practices will be inclusive of the needs of all children, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, LGBTI students, international students and children who are vulnerable.

Every person involved in Heathmont College has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

### Child safety principles

In its planning, decision-making and operations, Heathmont 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

Heathmont 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, the Child Safety Code of Conduct, the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#) and the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) are readily available online and in hard copy 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 inappropriate 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 Heathmont 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 and staff 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 allegation.

As part of Heathmont 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 school's 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 Heathmont 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

School leadership will maintain records of the above processes.

### Roles and responsibilities

School leaders will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct, which sets out clearly the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Specific child safety responsibilities:

- Assistant Principals are responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy every year.
- The Principal is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy. The school community should approach a member of the principal team (Principal or Assistant Principals) if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety 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 Heathmont College's 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 risk assessment 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.

## Recruitment

Heathmont College follows the Department's Recruitment in Schools guide to ensure child safe recruitment practices, available on the [Department's website](#).

All prospective volunteers are required to comply with our school's Volunteers Policy, including in relation to assessing the suitability of prospective volunteers and obtaining checks required under this policy.

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.
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## Training and supervision

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.

Our school culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in coming forward with any allegations or suspicions of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse. This training occurs annually or more often as required.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse, to promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability and vulnerable children.

New employees and volunteers will be inducted into the school, including by being referred to the Child Safety Policy (this document), the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures on the school website and the Staff Information Portal. They will also be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school's commitment to child safety, and that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. All employees of our school will be monitored and assessed via regular performance review to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported by school staff to the Principal or Assistant Principal and will be managed in accordance with Heathmont College's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures where required.

## Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

The school has clear expectations for all staff and volunteers (including homestay providers) in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. All staff (including school council employees) must follow the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) if there is an incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse. Immediate actions should include reporting their concerns to Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection, Victoria Police and/or another appropriate agency and notifying the principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns.

Heathmont College will never prohibit or discourage school staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse. The school will always take action to respond to a complaint in accordance with the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures. In accordance with Action 4 of the Four Critical Actions for Schools, Heathmont College will provide ongoing support for students affected by child abuse.

The Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures can be found at <https://www.heathmont.vic.edu.au/>

## Risk reduction and management

Heathmont College believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes, found in the school's risk assessment register. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.

We will identify and mitigate the risks of child abuse in school environments by taking into account the nature of each school environment, the activities expected to be conducted in that environment and the characteristics and needs of all children expected to be present in that environment.

Heathmont College monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the actions it takes to reduce or remove risks to child safety, more information can be found in the school's risk assessment register.

## Listening to, communicating with and empowering children

Heathmont College has developed a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/carers. We encourage child and parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/carers to understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Our school is committed to supporting and encouraging students to use their voice to raise and share their concerns with a trusted adult at any time of need. Students can access information on how to report abuse via Compass School Documents or the College website <https://www.heathmont.vic.edu.au/>.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the school to ensure a sense of belonging through our school belonging policy, our school values, our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships, our whole school approach to School Wide Positive Behaviours and Restorative Practice.

When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct with or abuse of a child, the school will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (and/or their parents/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 Heathmont College to read at the front office or school reception and on our college website <https://www.heathmont.vic.edu.au/>
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school
- School newsletters 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.
- Age appropriate discussions of child safety with students.
- Translation of Child safety policy and procedures into languages other than English as required,
- The Four Critical Actions are actively taught to mandatory reporters and other school staff, the whole school is encouraged to contribute to risk assessment and mitigation.

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

- standards of behaviour for students attending the school;
- healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality);
- resilience; and
- child abuse awareness and prevention.

Heathmont College engages in the Respectful Relationships program, e-smart education, and cyberbullying programs. Our unique 9Life program also covers many topics around keeping safe and healthy. Consent education is explicitly covered at all year levels in age appropriate ways.

## Communications

This school is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- Ensuring that the Child Safety Policy (this document), Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure are available on the school website.
- Once per term reminders in the school newsletter of our school's commitment to child safety
- Ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings and staff meetings for discussion
- Explicit coverage of the policy through all induction processes
- Posters throughout the school
- On our Staff Information Portal

## Confidentiality and privacy

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

## Related policies and documents

Related policies and documents include:

- [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#)
- [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations \(including Mandatory Reporting\) Policy and Procedures](#)
- 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
- Risk assessment register
- [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- [Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools](#)
- [Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending Policy and Advisory Library – Duty of Care](#)
- [Policy and Advisory Library – Child Protection Reporting Obligations](#)
- [Schools' Privacy Policy](#).

## Policy evaluation and review

### *Policy status and review*

The Principal is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at least every two years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the community.

### *Approval*

<b>Created date</b>	<b>November 2023</b>
<b>Consultation</b>	Presented and discussed at our November School Council meeting in 2023 Presented and discussed at whole school staff meeting in April 2024
<b>Endorsed by</b>	Kerryn Sandford, Principal
<b>Endorsed on</b>	24 November 2023
<b>Next review date</b>	October 2025

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed every year. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school community.



