



PURPOSE

Portland Secondary College's Child Safety 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.

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.

The policy will apply to the school environment (see Definitions section). The policy covers both 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; including the Re-Engagement Campus (Victoria Street)
- 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).

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STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY AND CHILD SAFETY PRINCIPLES

Portland Secondary College (Must Street & Victoria Parade Campuses) 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.

Portland Secondary College (Must Street & Victoria Parade Campuses) places a strong emphasis on the Welfare and Wellbeing of its school community. Its Mission Statement is to develop articulate, respectful and resourceful young people able to contribute positively to the global community. College Council, in conjunction with the College staff, believe students should be challenged and extended, offered success in worthwhile learning and given the chance to take increasing responsibility for their own education. The College promotes excellence in learning, positive relationships and personal growth. Our purpose is underpinned by the values of respect, success, resilience and creativity.

We know children can struggle to achieve their personal best if they are not safe from abuse.

At Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campus) our values guide the decisions and behaviours of all members of our school community, including in relation to child safety:

- Respect – for ourselves and others – Caring for, understanding, accepting and appreciating ourselves and others.
- Success – Striving to be the very best person you can be.
- Creativity –being open to new ideas
- Resilience – Bouncing back from difficulties and disappointments. Accepting challenges, trying hard and not giving up easily.

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We have a zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at Portland Secondary College (Must Street & Victoria Parade Campuses) is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse. This school explicitly prohibits corporal punishment.

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, and children who are vulnerable.

Portland Secondary College (Must Street & Victoria Parade Campuses) recognises the prevalence and impact of gender based discrimination and harassment and is committed to building a school culture that challenges the stereotypes, power differences and social norms that foster gender inequality. Portland Secondary College (Must Street & Victoria Parade Campuses) is committed to treating all members of the school community with dignity and respect regardless of their gender.

Every person involved in Portland Secondary 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.



All members of the school community will conduct themselves in a lawful, ethical, safe and responsible manner that recognises and respects the rights of others. Every member of the school community has a right to fully participate in an educational environment that is safe, supportive and inclusive. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity.

This shall be accomplished through:

- Providing quality educational experiences and teaching students how to be responsible for their own learning and behaviour
- Maximising student engagement by promoting learning in a stimulating, enjoyable, student centred context where risk taking and emotional resilience is actively encouraged
- Valuing the professionalism of staff to respond proactively to the learning and behavioural needs of students
- Developing a learning environment where students are taught positive learning behaviours that lead to academic and social and emotional success
- Fostering a strong sense of community where parents, teachers and students form productive partnerships and forge a spirit of responsibility, respect, tolerance and concern for each other.

Child safety principles

In its planning, decision-making and operations, Portland 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

Portland Secondary College's (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campuses) 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 Safe 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 in the Student Welfare Coordinator's office and Staff Handbooks for students and staff 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 Safe 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:
 - Understanding the 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)
 - Understanding the 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 Portland Secondary College's (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campus) child safe culture, **school leadership** (including the principal and assistant principal[s]) 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 Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campus) 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 Safe 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 Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campus)'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 Safe 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, ensure that selection, supervision and management practices are child safe.

School leadership will maintain records of the above processes.

Portland Secondary College (Must Street & Victoria Parade Campuses) shall appoint an individual Child Safety Officer with specified 'child-safe' duties in their job description which includes:

- Being the designated person to hear or be informed about all allegations or concerns
- Providing support to other personnel
- Record and respond consistently and in line with Portland Secondary College's legal requirements and policies and procedures.

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 Safe Code of Conduct, which sets out clearly the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Specific child safety responsibilities:

- The Assistant Principal (Teaching and Learning) is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy every three years.
- The Assistant Principal (Teaching and Learning) is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy. The school community should approach the Assistant Principal (Teaching and Learning) if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy.
- The Assistant Principal (Teaching and Learning) is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available.
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in Portland Secondary College's (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campuses) other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safe Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and risk assessment register.

Recruitment

Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campus) follows the Department's Recruitment in Schools guide to ensure child safe recruitment practices, available on the [Department's website](#).



Portland Secondary College (Must Street & Victoria Parade Campuses) applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, and shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. We shall ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect.

Job position descriptions will reflect the child safe standards and all applicants will be informed about the College's child safety practices including the College's Code of Conduct. Portland Secondary College requires all workers/volunteers to pass through the organisation's recruitment and screening processes prior to commencing their engagement with the College.

Persons applying for a role as a teacher with the College must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching. Persons applying for other roles in the College must hold a valid Working with Children's Check. Copies of these documents must be provided.

Thorough reference checks as per the approved internal procedure will be undertaken. This includes checking applicants' motivation to work with children, relevant and verifiable child-related work experience, understanding of professional boundaries, and communication skills. Copies of academic transcripts will be requested when appropriate and the applicant will be subject to a background search using Facebook, Google or LinkedIn. Those providing referee reports will be questioned about their relationship with the applicant, whether they have directly supervised the applicant's work with children and whether they have any concerns about the applicant working directly with children or adhering to the College's Code of Conduct. Checks should also question the applicant's understanding and respect for Aboriginal culture, cultural and linguistic diversity and the needs of children with a disability.

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

All prospective volunteers are required to comply with our school's Volunteers Policy, and all prospective volunteers are required to maintain a valid Working with Children Check, or to meet the guidelines outlined in the [Working with Children Policy](#).

Training and supervision

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

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, Out of Home Care students, LGBTI students 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 Safe Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures on the school website and in the Staff Handbook on Knowledge Base. 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 Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campus)'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 DHHS 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.

Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campus) 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, Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campus) will provide ongoing support for students affected by child abuse.

Links to the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures can be found in the further Information and Resources Section.

Risk reduction and management

Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campus) 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.

Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campus) 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

Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campus) 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 at the Student Welfare Coordinator Office.

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 Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campus) to read on the College's website.
- 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 discussion of child safety with students occur in mentor
- 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 Child Safe Standards are addressed and explained at parent information sessions.

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.

Respectful Relationships and e-smart education programs are delivered annually in the College and additionally at a point of need.

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
- Staff induction processes and Start of year procedures
- PROTECT posters are displayed in all areas of the College

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](#).

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations \(including Mandatory Reporting\) Policy and Procedures](#)
- 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](#)
- [Duty of Care Policy](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)

REQUIRED METHOD OF COMMUNICATION

- Portland Secondary College Council
- Staff Induction process
- Staff Handbook (Knowledge Base)
- School Website
- College Newsletter

REVIEW CYCLE

DATE	VERSION	RATIFIED BY	NEXT REVIEW
Nov 2021	5	School Council	Oct 2024