Child Safety Policy

Purpose

Oakwood School's Child Safety Policy sets out the school's commitment and approach to creating and maintaining a child safe organization 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 including when students are undertaking flexible and remote learning.

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)
- community venues where Oakwood School conducts classes

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).

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY AND CHILD SAFETY PRINCIPLES
Oakwood School 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.

Oakwood School is a multi-campus government school for students who have disengaged from school or for whom a mainstream school environment is deemed inappropriate to meet their needs. The students have experienced trauma and therefore, the program is specifically designed to engage, support and develop the skills of such vulnerable and disengaged students. The school's overarching purpose is to re-engage young people in learning and set them on a positive pathway to their future. The school has a distinctive approach summed up by our intention of "Learning, respect and empowerment."

Child safety is central to Oakwood policies, practices and programs. Oakwood School has zero tolerance for child abuse. 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, same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse young people, children with a disability and children who are vulnerable.

Every person involved in Oakwood School 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.

Oakwood School staff deliver the programs at nine locations. School sites in Caulfield North and Noble Park North, two leased buildings in Frankston, four campuses in council community centres in Hastings, Mornington, Pakenham and Rosebud, and one satellite VCAL program in Chelsea Longbeach Place. The school sites and Frankston each have their own campus principal, and the community sites have a campus leader under the direction of one of the campus/assistant principals. All students are under constant supervision from at least two Oakwood School staff and attend only one campus.

Child safety principles
In its planning, decision-making and operations, Oakwood School 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

Oakwood School'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 [http://www.oakwoodschool.vic.edu.au/childsafe-standards] and in hard copy at the school's reception 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, registered doctors, nurses and counsellors)
  - 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 Oakwood School's 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, same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse young people, children with a disability and children who are vulnerable, when implementing the Child Safe Standards
- 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 Oakwood School'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 Oakwood School'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, same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse young people, children with a disability 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, delegate responsibility to the Principal to ensure that selection, supervision and management practices are child safe.

As a part of Oakwood School's commitment to child safety, a number of actions are required for **all staff conducting school activities** at the following sites:

- Shed 11, Hastings
- My Place Youth Hub, Pakenham
- Seawinds Community Hub, Rosebud
- The Corner, Mornington

At site: Shed 11, Hastings:
- o Toilets – Students escorted to and from toilet area by staff, staff ensure vacancy of toilet area and remain outside to prevent public access during student use.
- o Student access areas on site: Lower left gate permanently locked, driveway into campus zone is gated. Staff supervision for 15 minutes before and after school, with patrolling duty paying particular attention to areas of limited visibility (e.g. the grounds behind the classroom).

At site: My Place Youth Hub, Pakenham:
- o Toilets – Students escorted to and from toilet area by staff, staff ensure vacancy of toilet area and remain outside to prevent public access during student use.
- o Glass windows ensure open visibility to main classroom area and computer areas when in use
- o During school hours, front glass doors are locked, entry is via a receptionist (permanent) employed by council
- o Student access areas on site: Students are not permitted beyond the desk in the consulting area. Staff supervision in permitted areas for 15 minutes before and after school hours, with patrolling duty paying particular attention to areas of limited visibility. Permitted areas are clearly communicated to students.

At site: Seawinds Community Hub, Rosebud
- o Toilets – Students escorted to and from toilet area by staff, staff ensure vacancy of toilet area and remain outside to prevent public access during student use.
- o Student access areas on site: If outside classroom, they would be escorted at all times by an

Oakwood staff member.
- o Staff supervision for 15 minutes before and after school, with patrolling duty paying particular attention to areas of limited visibility. Two staff are on duty, one inside and one outside.

At site: The Corner, Mornington
- o Toilets – Students escorted to and from toilet area by staff, staff ensure vacancy of toilet area and remain outside to prevent public access during student use.
- o Student access areas on site: If outside classroom, they would be escorted at all times by an Oakwood staff member.
- o Staff supervision for 15 minutes before and after school, with patrolling duty paying particular attention to areas of limited visibility. Two staff are on duty, one inside in foyer and one outside.

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:

- The Assistant Principal – Student Wellbeing is Oakwood School's Child Safety Officer and is responsible for ensuring that the Child Safety Policy is reviewed and updated every 3 years and for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy. The school community should approach the Assistant Principal - Student Wellbeing if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy.
- The Business Manager is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available.
- Each Campus Principal is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Child Safety Policy at their site and at the sites of third party providers.
- The Campus Principal at Noble Park is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Child Safety policy at Noble Park campus, and monitor their child safe policies and practices.
- The Campus Principal at Pakenham is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Child Safety policy at Pakenham campus, and monitor their child safe policies and practices.
- The Campus Principal at Caulfield Park is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Child Safety policy at Caulfield Park campus and monitor their child safe policies and practices.
- The Campus Principal at Frankston is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Child Safety policy at the Frankston campus (both buildings).
- The Assistant Principal is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Child Safety policy at Mornington, Hastings and Rosebud.
- The Principal, Assistant Principal – Student Wellbeing and Campus Principals monitor and evaluate the implementation of risk management strategies at all sites and as required, develop and oversee use of new risk management strategies.
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in Oakwood School'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 Child Safety Risk Register.

Recruitment

The principal of Oakwood School will use the Department's [Recruitment in Schools Policy and Guidelines](#) and Recruitment Online process to ensure that selection, supervision and management practices are child safe, including ensuring that:

- jobs involving child-connected work have a statement setting out the job's requirements and duties regarding child safety
- our school's Child Safety Code of Conduct is available on our website
- the selection criteria specify the relevant skills, personal qualities and abilities required for the efficient performance of a particular position in relation to child support and safety

Oakwood School will be guided by the Department's Recruitment in Schools guidelines regarding the recruitment and pre-employment check processes to ensure that relevant proof of personal identity, valid WWCC or other suitable check (such as registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching), and all other professional qualifications are ascertained to meet the child safe standards, as follows:

- Inform applicants for jobs involving child-connected work about the school's child safety practices (including the Code of Conduct)
- The interview complements the written application and detailed referee checks to validate an applicant's work history and experience. Referees nominated by the applicant will be called on to clarify, verify and add information about an applicant's history of work involving children. Pre-employment suitability checks are also conducted in accordance with the Department's Recruitment in School Policy and Guidelines.
- In addition to referee checks, pre-employment suitability checks are conducted following the recruitment decision process – see [Employment, Promotion and Transfer](#)]
- 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.

Staff monitoring is included as part of the schools' annual Professional Development Process (PDP) https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/performance-and-development-principal-class/policy-and-guidelines/online-pdp

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. An annual discussion on the individual and collective responsibilities for child safe standards is facilitated with staff to ensure they understand their roles and responsibilities.

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, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse young people, children with a disability and children who are vulnerable.

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. 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 Oakwood School's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures [http://www.oakwoodschool.vic.edu.au/childsafe-standards] where required.

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint
The school has clear expectations for all staff and volunteers 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.

Oakwood School 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, Oakwood School 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 [http://www.oakwoodschool.vic.edu.au/childsafe-standards].

Responding to reports or allegations of child abuse made against a student

School staff must act by following the Four Critical Actions: Responding to Student Sexual Offending as soon as they witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a suspicion that a student is a victim of student sexual offending and/or a student has engaged in sexual offending.

If staff are unsure whether a behaviour (or suspected behaviour) is student sexual offending you should seek further advice and follow the Four Critical Actions.

Staff must also act if they form a reasonable belief that a student's sexual offending is a result of child abuse by following the:

- Four Critical Actions: Responding to Student Sexual Offending, and
- Four Critical Actions: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

Risk reduction and management
Oakwood School believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes, found in the school's Child Safety Risk Register. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative and risk management 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.

Oakwood School 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 Child Safety Risk Register.

The background of students at Oakwood School is diverse but they have in common the experience of trauma in their lives through for example, violence, family breakdown and associated mental health issues. Often young people have not engaged in learning because of chronic anxiety, or specific learning or language difficulties.

The Oakwood School program is specifically designed to engage, support and develop the skills of such vulnerable and disengaged students.

As part of the enrolment process at Oakwood School the student attends a series of meetings that enable Oakwood School staff to better understand the young person in a case managed approach alongside parents, carers and other professionals. This gradual process also allows the student time to become accustomed to the school and teachers and to become aligned with the school values and processes.

This induction process is designed to ensure that when the young person starts at Oakwood School they are prepared and ready to focus on learning. Students receive 1:1 teaching and when they are ready, are moved into a small class of students. All students receive constant supervision by two staff and have a small group of school staff in their 'team' who they can seek support from as needed (i.e. administration staff, school/campus leadership, wellbeing and teaching staff). Students attend the one campus for their program after which they finish their school day and leave. These strategies help the students to re-engage with learning and experience success, and they also put in place many routines, structures, relationships and practices that also promote and support child safety.

Oakwood School provides:

- Excellence in Teaching and Learning
- Trauma informed practice within a positive, predictable, calm and structured learning environment
- Small classes and individual learning support
- Teaching based on the learning needs of the young person
- Partnerships with agencies to provide holistic support and services as required
- Individual case management
- Integrated pathways support

This combined with our ethos of Learning, Respect and Empowerment lends to our positive school culture.

The school focuses on establishing and modelling positive respectful relationships between teachers, students and the broader school community. Its aim is to establish multiple and diverse opportunities for students to experience success in their learning.

This trauma informed learning environment fosters the dignity and self-esteem of our students and enables them to thrive in their learning and development

Oakwood Student Enrolment and Staff induction processes are designed to promote a safe and supportive learning environment. To ensure that staff and students are aware of their responsibilities to each other, a comprehensive induction process has been developed for both staff and students under the areas of Learning, Respect and Empowerment.

The fortnightly individual educational plans, called Learning Maps, determine student's learning activities and tasks that enable skill development in literacy and numeracy. We believe in empowering our students to develop responsibility and ownership of their own learning as it helps to build confidence and foster a positive attachment to the school.

Every staff member involved in Oakwood School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays 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.

Specific Child Safety Risk Management strategies that are integrated into the fabric of Oakwood School include: (see risk assessment register for more detail)

- Thorough induction program for staff and students.
- Students are never left unsupervised at any time.
- Teachers are always scheduled to work with at least one another staff member present.
- Classroom spaces are designed to facilitate interaction and communication between staff with clear windows or larger open shared classroom spaces.
- Teachers use Oakwood School's Positive Behaviours Continuum when developing each students personalised learning plan. This includes standards of behaviour for students, healthy and respectful relationships, sexuality, resilience, child abuse awareness and prevention.
- Child safety as a standard discussion item on School Leadership Team and staff meetings
- All staff undertake the Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations online module annually.
- Inclusion of child abuse obligations in all staff position descriptions.
- The employment of wellbeing staff or psychologists at all sites.
- Campus Principals conduct an end day (each day) debrief to identify any issues arising and to lead the development of treatment solutions.

Oakwood School monitors on an ongoing basis staff and student work practices and behaviour for 'warning signals' and indicators of abuse 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

Oakwood School 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 School Reception, from the Campus Principal or on the school website.

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 Oakwood School to read at School Reception or on the school website
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school

- Notice Boards, School newsletters and or the School Website 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
- The principles of SWPBS is embedded at Oakwood School focusing on consistency in approach and explicitly teaching positive and appropriate behaviour for all students.
- Welfare and allied health teams support students and families to access services as necessary

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; i.e. use of School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support and eSmart education programs
- healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality); i.e. use of Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships (RRRR) learning materials
- resilience; i.e. use of RRRR learning materials, and
- child abuse awareness and prevention; i.e. use of RRRR learning materials,

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 and at reception at each campus.
- Ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings and staff meetings for discussion
- Ensuring child safety is discussed with prospective parents, guardians and students at school tours and information sessions and is promoted in school newsletters.
- Ensuring child safety is regularly discussed in class.
- Ensuring volunteers, visitors and contractors are inducted with our child safety policies and practices

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 Schools' Privacy Policy.

Related policies and documents
Related policies and documents include:

- 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
- Policy and Advisory Library – Duty of Care
- Policy and Advisory Library – Child Protection Reporting Obligations

Policy evaluation and review
This policy was ratified at the Oakwood School Council February 2021 and is scheduled to be reviewed in December 2023.