

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Victory Christian College has an overarching priority that all children in our care are safe, feel safe and that child abuse is non-existent in our community.

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse.

Victory Christian College is committed to protecting our children from injury and harm, and to promoting their health & safety; both physical and emotional whilst at school, on school activities and in the school's virtual world.

Child Safety is the shared responsibility of all adults at Victory Christian College. This includes teaching staff, support staff, volunteers, contractors, members of the school community, and the College Board.

CULTURAL MATTERS

We value and celebrate diversity, especially cultural diversity, and we do not tolerate discriminatory practices. To achieve this, we:

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students and their families
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families
- Promote the personal safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability and make them feel welcome and part of all aspects of school life.

LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

To ensure Child Safety, Victory Christian College has in place Procedures and Policies, which must be followed to ensure that the college remains safe for children and that we have zero incidents of Child Abuse.

These Procedures and Policies include:

- Duty of Care
- Restrictive Interventions Policy
- Induction of new staff procedures
- Staff Code of Conduct and Contracts
- Student Code of Conduct
- Student Well-Being Framework
- Child Protection Policies
- ICT and Internet Acceptable Use Policy
- Transport Policy
- Swimming Policy
- Camps and Excursion Policy
- Contractor Induction/Management Procedure
- Facilities Design Procedures
- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Risk Management Policy

Note: Special notice should be given to this policy as it mandates that Risk Assessments must include the risk of Child Abuse. These may include Sporting Events, Overseas Trips, College Productions, and taking any group of students off the school property.

- Staff will be trained and made aware of these policies annually and new employees will be trained and made aware of these during our New Staff Induction process.

CHILD SAFETY OFFICERS

The Child Safety Officers will be the Principal, Deputy Principals and the College Chaplain.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COLLEGE BOARD

The Board of Victory Christian College has ultimate responsibility for the detection and prevention of child abuse and is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place.

The Board is required to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its risk control systems. The Board is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures, and a Child Safety Code of Conduct, are in place and being adhered to.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRINCIPAL

- Dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, College, policies and procedures, and the College's Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Ensuring that all adults within the Victory Christian College community are aware of their obligation to report suspected sexual abuse of a child in accordance with these policies and procedures
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of their obligation to observe the Code of Conduct (particularly as it relates to child safety)
- Providing support for staff, contractors and volunteers in undertaking their child protection responsibilities
- Listening to, and acting on, any concerns students or their parents and carers, raise with us.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF EMPLOYEES IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Employees in leadership positions have the express responsibility of embedding a culture that ensures ongoing Child Safety at Victory Christian College.

They are to assess the risk of child abuse within their area of responsibility and eradicate/minimise any risk to the extent possible.

They should be familiar with the types of abuse that might occur within their area of responsibility and be alert for any indications of such conduct.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF EMPLOYEES, CONTRACTORS AND VOLUNTEERS

All Staff, Volunteers and Contractors share in the responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse, and must:

- Adhere to Child Safety Policies, Procedures, Instructions and Guidelines
- Co-operate with the College with respect to any action taken to comply with any requirement imposed by or under the Policies, Ministerial Orders or Act
- Not wilfully place at risk the health and safety of any children
- Familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the Code of Conduct, Victory Christian College's policy and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements
- Report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities in consultation with the Principal, (i.e. Police and/or the Child Protection Services) and fulfill their obligations as mandatory reporters
- Report any suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to their supervisor (or, if their supervisor is involved in the suspicion, to a Child Safety Officer)
- Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety.

STRATEGIES TO EMBED A CULTURE OF CHILD SAFETY

STRATEGY	RESPONSIBLE STAFF MEMBER/S
We will include Child Safety on Sub-School Meeting Agendas	Sub School Leaders
We will annually train Board members and staff about Child Safety Standards, including current regulations, and reinforce our collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse in the school environment.	Board Chair and Principal
We will annually present Choices, Decisions and Outcomes (or an equivalent program) that teaches secondary students about Healthy & Respectful Relationships	Deputy Principal in coordination with the Gianna Centre
We will annually run student Mental Health, Resilience and Child Safety Workshops.	To be coordinated by the Deputy Principal and Chaplain
We will advise parents of our Child Protection Policies and our Child Safety Code of Conduct through our newsletter and website. The Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct will be published in the Parent Handbook, which outlines that managing the risk or child abuse is the collective responsibility of all members of the school community.	Website Manager & Newsletter Editor Administration Staff
We will embed Child Safety Topics in the P.E. and Health curriculum.	Health & P.E Faculty Leader and Staff
We will consider Child Safety matters on all risk assessments	Deputy Principal and Teaching Staff
We will provide students with visible access to the Child Protection Fact Sheet, and Child Protection Poster.	Administration Staff
We will promote the participation and empowerment of students in decision making about Child Safety, through focus group discussions with student leaders and class representatives.	Student Leadership Coordinator

EMPLOYMENT AND INDUCTION PROCEDURES

Victory Christian College undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all workers which aims to:

- Promote and protect the safety of all children under the care of Victory Christian College.
- Identify the safest and most suitable people who share Victory Christian College's values and commitment to protect children.
- Prevent a person from working at Victory Christian College if they pose a risk to children.

Victory Christian College requires:

- All new staff to sign a statutory declaration in regards to previous allegations of sexual abuse or misconduct, as part of their employment contract.
- All non-teaching staff, volunteers and contractors to have current working with children's checks.
- All teachers to have VIT registration.
- All parents participating in school camps, or directly responsible for groups of students on excursions to have a current Working with Children's check and to read and sign the Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- All new staff and Contractors to complete a safety induction, to read, acknowledge and sign the Child Safety Code of Conduct.

ONGOING TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation, including members of the College Board, understand that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all Staff and Volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations 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.

We also support our 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.

Staff members continued suitability for child-connected work will be monitored and assessed through the annual Staff Appraisal process, including a peer observation process for teaching staff.

PROCEDURE FOR RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

A Child is anyone under the age of 18.

Child abuse includes any act committed against a child involving physical violence, sexual offence, grooming, serious emotional or psychological harm, or serious neglect. (See Mandatory Reporting Policy for detailed descriptions and indicators.)

Fulfilling the roles and responsibilities contained in the following procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse;

REPORTING

Any Staff member, Volunteer or Contractor who has grounds to suspect abusive activity must immediately notify a Child Safety Office about their concern.

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

Child Safety Officers must report complaints of suspected abusive behaviour or misconduct to the Principal and to any external regulatory body such as the police.

Allegations of misconduct against a Staff member, Contractor or Volunteer, which meet the Reportable Conduct Scheme criteria, must be reported by the Principal to the Commission for Children and Young People, within three business days of the report being made.

Mandatory/voluntary reporting requirements are documented in the Child Protection Policies.

INVESTIGATING

If the appropriate child protection service or the police decide to investigate this report, all Employees, Contractors or Volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Whether or not the authorities decide to investigate, the Principal will consult with the authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate. If it is decided that such an investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the Principal may decide to conduct such an investigation. All Employees, Contractors and Volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation. If the allegations reported meet the Reportable Conduct Scheme Criteria, the Principal must undertake an investigation and report the outcomes to the Commission for Children and Young People.

Any such investigation will follow a systematic approach and apply procedural fairness, according to the Commission's guidelines.

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

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

RESPONDING

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

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

PRIVACY

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. Victory Christian College will have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how the personal information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will be able to access it.

LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

Victory Christian College takes its legal responsibilities seriously, including:

FAILURE TO DISCLOSE:

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. Please refer to the Failure to Disclose Policy for additional information.

FAILURE TO PROTECT:

People of authority in our organisation 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. Please refer to the Failure to Protect Policy for additional information.

Any personnel who are **Mandatory Reporters** must comply with their duties. Please refer to the Mandatory Reporting Policy for additional information.

REVIEW OF PROCEDURES AND POLICY

The Child Safety procedures and policies will be reviewed by the College Board annually.

WHERE TO GO FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

The following people will be able to provide further information

- Principal, Anne Marie Rodgers
- Deputy Principals, Chris Harvey and Craig Kanzamar
- College Chaplain, Steve Emonson

RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS:

VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT ACTS - DUTY OF CARE

- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) (the Act) establishes the principles for the wellbeing of children; sets the standards framework, provides for the oversight functions of the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) and the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
 - Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015 (Vic)
 - Children Legislation Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Act 2017 (Vic)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) provides for the protection of children including mandatory reporting.
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
 - Crimes Amendment (Grooming) Act 2014 (Vic)
 - Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014 provides for the offences of failure to protect and failure to disclose.
- Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic)
 - Wrongs Amendment (Organisational Child Abuse) Act 2017 (Vic) imposes a duty of care to prevent physical or sexual abuse of children committed by people associated with the organisation.
 - Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic) assists in protecting children from sexual or physical harm through the provision of a screening process.
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)
 - Education Legislation Amendment (Victorian Institute of Teaching, TAFE and Other Matters) Act 2018 (Vic) aligns the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) scheme for registering teachers with the Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic).

OTHER REGULATORY INSTRUMENTS AND REPORTS

- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) Minimum Standards 2021
- Ministerial Order 870 January 2016 (Vic) – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools.
- Betrayal of Trust Report 2014 (Vic)
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, Australian Human Rights Commission 2018 and adopted by the Council of Australian Governments in February 2019.