



CHILD SAFE POLICY

Rationale:

All Victorian schools are required to have a child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety that details:

- The principles that will guide the school in developing policies and procedures to create and maintain a child safe school environment; and
- the actions the school proposes to take to:
 - i. demonstrate its commitment to child safety and monitor the school's adherence to its child safety policy
 - ii. support, encourage and enable school staff, parents, and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters and
 - iii. support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.

Our commitment to child safety:

Torquay P-6 College is committed to child safety. We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously. Torquay P-6 College is committed to preventing child abuse, identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks. Torquay P-6 College has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers. Torquay P-6 College is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability. We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

A Child Safety Code of Conduct:

To promote child safety in the school environment we acknowledge the following:

All students have a right to:

- take part in learning programs that meet their individual needs
- feel secure and to be safe in a caring and supportive environment
- work and play without interference in an atmosphere of harmony and cooperation
- receive respect, kindness and courtesy and to be treated with fairness
- have learning continue without disruption in a supportive environment
- be valued for their individuality including; race, gender, cultural, physical or intellectual diversity
- expect the school rules are fair, consistently implemented and respect the rights of all involved.

All students have a responsibility to:

- care and value themselves, others, teachers and the school community
- be safety conscious in relation to themselves and others
- treat others with respect and good manners
 - uphold the guidelines of good behaviour, modelling and supporting school rules and school values
- develop a sense of accountability for their own actions
- work to achieve their personal best whilst allowing others to do the same
- allow for others to learn and to respect the rights of others

- explore their full potential in their learning.

School staff adheres to the following standards about the ways in which school staff are expected to behave with children:

- school staff provide opportunities for all students to learn
- school staff treat their students with courtesy and dignity
- school staff work within the limits of their professional expertise
- school staff maintain objectivity in their relationships with students
- school staff are always in a professional relationship with the students in their school whether at school or not.

Our children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants at Torquay P-6 College. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance at Torquay College, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:\

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Our staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children at Torquay P-6 College. All of our staff and volunteers must abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in Torquay P-6 College understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility. Torquay College 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 confidentially. 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.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand Torquay P-6 College's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to this organisation's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further).

Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Torquay P-6 College understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations. We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability. All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, with the exception of teaching staff,

are required to hold a Working with Children Check, provide evidence of this Check and complete parent/volunteer helper training. Please see the [Working with Children Check](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> for further information

We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting appropriate candidates. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context to ensure the appropriate candidates are employed.

Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence. We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using Sentral, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored. If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it. (See the DET Privacy Policy).

Risk management

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks posed by physical environments (for examples, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff, parent or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media). If the school identifies risks of child abuse occurring in one of more school environments the authority must make a record of those risks and specify the action(s) the school will take to reduce or remove the risks (risk controls).

Explanatory note: Different risk controls may be necessary for particular groups of children depending on the nature of the risk and the diversity characteristics of children affected by the risk.

As part of its risk management strategy and practices, the school must monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls.

At least annually, the school must ensure that appropriate guidance and training is provided to the individual members of the school staff about:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse;
- child abuse risks in the school environment; and
- the school's current child safety standards.

Strategies to promote child empowerment and participation

The school authority must develop strategies to deliver appropriate education about:

- standards of behaviour for students attending the school;
- healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality);
- resilience; and
- child abuse awareness and prevention
- The school must promote the child safety standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children.

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

After forming a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection a mandated staff member must make a report to Child Protection as soon as practicable. Staff members, **whether or not mandated**, need to report to the principal or assistant principal their observations when a belief is formed in the course of undertaking their professional duties. A report must be made as soon as reasonable after forming the belief and on each occasion on which they become aware of any further reasonable grounds for the belief.

If one staff member has a different view from another staff member about making a report and the staff member continues to hold the belief that a child is in need of protection to hold the belief that a child is in need of protection, that person is obliged to make a report.

Refer to the Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedures Policy 2014 for procedures in response to allegations of child abuse.

These procedures do not:

- prohibit or discourage school staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse to a person external to the school
- state or imply that it is the victim's responsibility to inform the police or other authorities of the allegation
- require staff to make a judgment about the truth of the allegation of child abuse
- prohibit staff from making records in relation to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse

Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

- Risk management strategies have been developed within the following school policies:
 - Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedures Policy
 - Student Engagement Policy
 - Duty of Care Policy

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

This policy was last ratified by Torquay College Council in October 2019
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