



Child Safe Program

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

If you are a non-English speaker who needs help to understand this Policy, please contact **Mernda Hills Christian College** Reception.

Background

Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited have a strong commitment to providing students with a safe and nurturing environment in which to prosper and thrive. Our belief is that students and young children will truly flourish when their spiritual, mental, physical, and social needs are met. We want to inspire and care holistically for each person - equipping them with the beliefs, values, and skills to live a life of purpose, hope, joy and peace as a global citizen for Christ.

Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited is the incorporated entity that operates as Adventist Schools Victoria. **Mernda Hills Christian College** is owned and operated by Adventist Schools Victoria.

Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited Board of Directors has approved this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy on December 4th, 2024. It will be reviewed on December 4th, 2025.

Purpose

Our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates the College's strong commitment to child safety and wellbeing and to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly environment. It provides an overview of the policies and practices that we have developed to keep our students safe, including from abuse or other harm.

Our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy outlines the key elements of our approach to implementing Ministerial Order 1359 (which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments) and to the College as a child safe organisation.

It informs the College community about everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards students and guides the policies, processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work, which are set out in the College's Child Safety Program. (1)

Mernda Hills Christian College Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to be read and understood in conjunction with, the [Victorian Child Safe Standards](#) and [Ministerial Order 1359](#).

The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy provides the framework for:

- the implementation of the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order No 1359
- the implementation of the Child Safe Policy
- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures, consistent with [PROTECT Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosure and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#) (PROTECT Four Critical Actions) and [PROTECT Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#) (Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending), that promote child protection, safety and wellbeing within the College
- the creation of a safe and supportive College environment and a positive and robust child safe culture
- the promotion and open discussion of child safety issues within the College
- compliance with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child safety and wellbeing, including child protection, in Victoria.

Scope

The College's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy applies to all adults in the College community, whether or not their work involves direct contact with students, including:

- Staff and Direct Contact Contractors (including External Education Providers) who are "school staff" within the meaning of Ministerial Order 1359

- other types of Contractors
- Volunteers
- Visitors.

This Policy applies in all physical, virtual and online College environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including all locations provided for a student's use, (for example on-site and off-site College grounds, sporting events, camps and excursions and environments provided by External Education Providers and other Contractors).

Definitions

Definitions of the following terms used in the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy can be found in [Child Safety Program Definitions](#):

- child/young person
- child abuse and other harm
- child safety and wellbeing
- child safety incident or concern
- child-connected work
- child-related work
- contractor
- school environment
- school staff
- school governing authority
- staff/staff member
- student
- visitor
- volunteer.

Roles and Responsibilities

Child safety and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility. All adults in the College community have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety, wellbeing and protection of students.

Specific responsibilities are summarised at the end of this Policy.

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing

All children and young people who come to Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited have a right to feel and be safe. We are committed to providing a child safe and child friendly environment, where children and young people are safe and feel safe and can actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.

We have a zero tolerance for child abuse and other harm and are committed to acting in students' best interests and keeping them safe from harm.

The College regards its child safety responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child safety and wellbeing laws and regulations and maintaining a child safe culture.

Each member of the College community has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role that they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all students is at the forefront of all that they do and every decision that they make.

Child Safety Standards

Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited has also developed specific child safe principles and values relevant to its own specific circumstances that guide our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect students from abuse and harm.

The Victorian Child Safe Standards

The Victorian Child Safe Standards were originally developed in response to the Victorian Parliament's Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations. They were replaced by a set of new Standards in 2022, to reflect the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and to support greater national consistency. There are 11 Victorian Child Safe Standards. They are:

Victoria's Child Safe Standards

- **Child Safe Standard 1** – Establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.
- **Child Safe Standard 2** – Ensure that child safety and wellbeing are embedded in school leadership, governance and culture.
- **Child Safe Standard 3** – Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
- **Child Safe Standard 4** – Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
- **Child Safe Standard 5** – Equity is upheld and diverse needs are respected in policy and practice.
- **Child Safe Standard 6** – People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
- **Child Safe Standard 7** – Ensure that processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.
- **Child Safe Standard 8** – Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
- **Child Safe Standard 9** – Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
- **Child Safe Standard 10** – Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
- **Child Safe Standard 11** – Policies and procedures that document how schools are safe for children, young people and students.
- Ministerial Order 1359 provides the framework for child safety in schools.

The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) monitors and enforces compliance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards for all registered schools in Victoria.

Mernda Hills Christian College Child Safety Principles and Values

1. All children have the right to be safe.
2. The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
3. The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected.
4. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our **Child Safe Code of Conduct** and **Staff and Student Professional Boundaries** policy.
5. The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.
6. Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our **College** community.
7. Procedures are in place to screen all staff, Direct Contact Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers who have direct contact with children.
8. Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
9. Child safety training is mandatory for all Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited Board of Directors members, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers.
10. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the **College** community.

11. Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Children and other children who are vulnerable (such as children in out-of-home care or children experiencing gender confusion) have the right to special care and support.
12. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

Mernda Hills Christian College Policy

Child Safety Codes of Conduct

Our Child Safety Codes of Conduct include a [Child Safe Code of Conduct](#) and a [Staff and Student Professional Boundaries](#) policy. Together, these Codes of Conduct set boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults in our College community and students, including in physical, online and virtual environments.

We also have a [Student Code of Conduct](#), which includes standards of behaviour for students relevant to child safety and wellbeing.

Our Child Safety Codes of Conduct include clear processes to report inappropriate behaviour. We publish our Child Safety Codes of Conduct on our public website so that everyone can easily find out what behaviours are acceptable and unacceptable at our College and how to report inappropriate behaviour.

We also provide additional information to students and families about the Child Safety Codes of Conduct, to ensure that they know what behaviours are acceptable and unacceptable and how to report inappropriate behaviour.

Cultural Safety

At Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe College where the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, values and practices are respected.

We identify, confront and do not tolerate racism, and we address any instances of racism within the school environment with appropriate consequences.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, we recognise the link between culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, their

families and their communities (including local Aboriginal communities relevant to the College) to have a voice and presence in our College's planning, policies, and activities.

The specific strategies that we have adopted to promote cultural safety in our College community are set out in our [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students \(Child Safety\)](#) policy.

Student Empowerment and Participation

Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited is a child safe and child-centred organisation, and we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We ensure that our physical, virtual and online environments are friendly and welcoming to all children and young people.

We actively seek to include students in decisions that affect them. This includes decisions about organisational planning, delivery of services, management of facilities, and learning and assessment environments.

We ensure that students know about their rights to safety, information and participation. We actively seek to understand what makes students feel safe in our College and regularly communicate with students about what they can do if they feel unsafe.

We recognise the importance of friendships and encourage respectful relationships, strong friendships and support from peers.

The specific strategies that we have adopted to promote the participation of and empowerment of students, and to implement all of the above obligations, are set out in the [Participation and Empowerment of Students](#) section of our Child Safety Program.

Parent/Carer, Family and Community Engagement at the College

The College recognises that parents and carers have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their children. We ensure that they participate in decisions affecting their children.

We ensure that families and relevant communities (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, other communities that make up our Staff and student cohort, and the local community in which our College operates) know about the

College's operations and policies, including its Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and the Child Safety Codes of Conduct, record keeping practices, risk management, and complaints and investigation processes.

We actively seek to include families and relevant communities in decisions about organisational planning, delivery of services, management of facilities, and learning and assessment environments.

We build cultural safety at the College through partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as well as with culturally and linguistically diverse communities that make up our staff and student cohort.

The specific strategies that we have adopted to promote the engagement of parents/carers, families, and relevant communities in child safety and wellbeing at the College, to make information about child safety and wellbeing available and accessible, and to implement all of the above obligations, are set out in the [Family and Community Involvement in Child Safety policy](#) in our Child Safety Program.

Diversity and Equity

As a member of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist school system, our college operates within the statements of belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Consistent with the statements of belief of the Seventh-day Adventist church, is the belief that every person is made in the image and likeness of God, and this understanding calls for recognition of diversity and the need for equity and inclusion.

To achieve this, our **College** is committed to:

- supporting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families
- supporting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families
- supporting students with disability and their families and act to promote their participation
- supporting students and families of diverse sexuality and making reasonable adjustments to accommodate their needs within the values, ethos and Statements of Belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
- recruiting a diverse workforce that support and uphold the values, ethos and Statements of Belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and are equipped to meet the unique needs of each student, staff member and family

- provide Staff, Direct Contact Volunteers and Direct Contact Contractors with training about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, disability, culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and those with particular experiences or needs
- providing opportunities for diverse cultural expression and recognition of cultural differences while upholding the values, ethos and Statements of Belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
- promoting the inclusion of students of differing abilities.

The specific strategies that we have adopted to promote equity and respect diversity at the **College** are set out in the Family and Community Involvement, Cultural Safety and Equity/Diversity section of our **Child Safety** Program.

Suitable Staff, Volunteers and Contractors and Child Safety Knowledge, Skills and Awareness (Child Safety Human Resources Management)

The specific human resources management strategies that we have adopted at the College to promote child safety and wellbeing are set out in the Child Safety Human Resources Management section of our Child Safety Program. They include the following:

Recruitment and Screening

Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of Staff, Volunteers and Contractors to engage the most suitable and appropriate people to work with our students. Our practices include:

- making our commitment to child safety and wellbeing clear in recruitment advertising and documentation
- requiring all Staff and relevant Volunteers and Contractors to maintain a valid VIT Registration or WWC (working with children) clearance, and sighting, verifying and recording this information
- using additional selection, background checking and screening processes that take into account child safety considerations.

Training on and Information About Child Safety

As a part of Mernda Hills Christian College induction process, all Staff, as well as relevant Volunteers and Contractors, must complete our child safety induction program, which includes information about our child safety policies, practices and procedures.

All Staff, as well as relevant Volunteers and Contractors also receive refresher and ongoing child safety training at least annually.

Our child safety induction and ongoing training program includes information about:

- this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- the Child Safety Codes of Conduct
- recognising child abuse and other harm and identifying key indicators, including harm caused by other children and young people
- our policies and procedures for responding to and reporting child safety incidents or concerns (including mandatory reporting, reporting to police and reportable conduct obligations)
- our policies and procedures for information sharing and record keeping about child safety incidents and concerns
- WWC clearances and other child safety and wellbeing human resources practices
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the College's environments.

The College provides all Visitors to the College, including Casual Volunteers and Contractors, with information about the Child Safe Codes of Conduct and how to report child safety incidents or concerns to the College and to relevant external authorities.

Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited Board of Directors also receives child safety training at least annually, to ensure that its members are equipped with the knowledge required to make decisions in the best interests of student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our College's environment. Its training includes guidance on:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse
- child safety and wellbeing risks in our College's environment
- the College's child safety policies, procedures, codes and practices.

Ongoing Supervision, Management and Support

The College's Child Safety Advocates and Leadership Team provide supervision and support to all Staff, Direct Contact and Regular Volunteers, and Direct Contact and Regular Contractors to ensure that they are compliant with the College's approach to child safety and wellbeing. Our child safety supervision and support program includes:

- annual performance reviews for all staff members

- appointing a supervising staff member to Direct Contact Volunteers/Contractors and to those Regular Volunteers/Contractors who are engaged in “child-connected work”
- professional development programs for Staff that include child safety education.

The College swiftly manages any inappropriate behaviour towards students, in accordance with our policies and legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing is the paramount consideration when managing inappropriate behaviour.

Complaints and Reporting Processes: The College’s Response to Child Safety Incidents or Concerns

Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited fosters a culture that encourages everyone in the College community to raise concerns and complaints about child safety and wellbeing. We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns set out in the **Procedures** below, and in our Community Complaints and Appeals Policy.

We also have clear procedures that all Staff, Volunteers and Contractors must follow whenever they witness, suspect or receive a complaint about a child safety incident or concern involving a student, a staff member, a Volunteer, a Contractor or the College, set out in the **Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns** section of the Child Safety Program. These are summarised for students, parents/carers and other members of the College community in our public-facing Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns and public-facing Procedures for Managing Child Safety Incidents or Concerns At or Involving the School or its Staff.

Our Student Behaviour Management Policy cover complaints and concerns relating to physical violence, bullying and other harmful student behaviours.

The College will take appropriate, prompt action in response to all child safety incidents or concerns, including all complaints, allegations or disclosures of abuse or other harm, when Staff, Volunteers, Contractors, students, parents/carers or anyone else reports these to the College.

The safety and wellbeing of the student/s involved in the matter will be the paramount consideration when responding to child safety incidents and concerns. The College follows the National Office of Child Safety’s [Complaint Handling Guide: Upholding the rights of children and young people](#) and the Commission for Children and Young People’s [Including Children and Young People in Reportable Conduct Investigations resources](#) when investigating and responding to child safety incidents and concerns.

The College's response will include:

- externally reporting all matters that meet the required relevant thresholds to Child Protection (Mandatory Reports), the Police (Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse), the CCYP (Reportable Conduct), and/or the Victorian Institute of Teaching (Teacher Misconduct), depending on the issues raised and consistent with [PROTECT Four Critical Actions](#) and [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#)
- fully cooperating with any resulting investigation by an external agency
- protecting any student connected to the child safety incident or concern until it is resolved and providing ongoing support to those affected
- taking particular measures in response to child safety incidents or concerns about an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student, a student from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, a student with disability, and other vulnerable students (such as students who are unable to live at home or students who identify as lesbian gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex)
- sharing information with, or requesting information from, external people or agencies as permitted or required under the Child Information Sharing Scheme and/or the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme
- securing and retaining records of the child safety incident or concern and the College's response to it
- taking broader actions to improve child safety at the College (including systemic reviews and resulting improvements).

Child Safety Risk Management

Mernda Hills Christian College and Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited recognise the importance of a risk management approach to child safety and to minimising the risk of harm to children and young people without compromising their rights to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities. The College's Child Safety Risk Management Strategy can be found [here](#).

Our **Child Safe Procurement Policy** makes sure that we ensure the safety of children, young people and students when we purchase facilities, goods and services.

We identify, assess and manage child safety risks in all College environments, based on a range of factors including the nature of our College's activities, its physical, virtual and online environments

and the characteristics of the student body. We use this information to inform our policies, procedures and activity planning.

We record identified risks to child safety and wellbeing in our Child Safety Risk Register, along with the actions in place at the College to manage these risks. Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited Board of Directors, the Principal and/or the Leadership Team monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these actions at least annually.

Child Safety Privacy and Information Sharing

The College collects, uses and discloses information about students and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws and other relevant laws, including laws that permit the College to disclose information about child safety and wellbeing to external people and agencies. For information about how the College collects, uses and discloses this information, refer to our Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Ltd Privacy Policy is available [here](#).

Child Safety Record Keeping

The College is committed to best practice record keeping about child safety incidents and concerns in accordance with Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards (including minimum retention periods).

The College records all internal and external reports of child safety incidents and concerns, as well as any other responses by the College using [PROTECT Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse - A Template for Victorian Schools](#) or, if the incident or concern involves student sexual offending, the [PROTECT Responding to Suspected Student Sexual Offending - A Template for Victorian Schools](#).

When keeping records of child safety incidents or concerns, the College maintains confidentiality and privacy for students and families in accordance with federal and state privacy legislation.

Communications

Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited is committed to communicating our child safety and wellbeing strategies, policies and procedures to our College community through the measures set out in the Implementation section below. In addition, we:

- display code of conduct posters, safety policy posters and complaints handling posters around the College
- provide child safety information and updates through parent portals, newsletters and email correspondence
- include child safety as a regular agenda item at Leadership Team meetings and staff meetings.

Child Safety Program and Practice Review

Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited is committed to the continuous improvement of the policies and procedures making up our entire Child Safety Program and of our child safety and wellbeing practices. We review the Program as a whole annually (or earlier if a significant child safety incident occurs at the College or legislation changes) for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child safety and wellbeing related laws, regulations and standards.

When undertaking these reviews, the College:

- actively seeks, actions, and incorporates feedback from students, families, the wider College community, Staff, Volunteers and Contractors
- analyses any complaints and child safety incidents that may have occurred
- communicates any learnings, adjustments or amendments to policy and practice widely throughout the College community.

Child Safety Procedures

Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns to the College

Whenever there are concerns that a child or young person is in immediate danger call the Police on 000.

Any person, including all Staff, Volunteers, Contractors, parents/carers and students, can at any time report concerns about the wellbeing of a child aged under 17 to Child Protection by:

- during business hours (8:45am-5:00pm, Monday to Friday), contacting the Child Protection intake service for the local government area where the child resides, listed [here](#).
- after hours, telephoning 13 12 78.

Staff, Volunteers and Contractors

Staff, Volunteers and Contractors must follow our Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns and report child safety incidents or concerns internally to a Child Safety Advocate or the Principal.

Where the incident or concerns involves the Principal, internal reports should instead be made to the Chief Executive Officer.

We recognise that some individuals, particularly children, face additional vulnerabilities to child abuse and other harm, as well as additional barriers to disclosing child safety incidents or concerns. Our Child Safety Program provides guidance on identifying additional vulnerabilities and barriers, and contains strategies for supporting these individuals to participate in the College community and enabling them to disclose child safety incidents or concerns to the College.

Students, Parents/Carers and Community Members

Students who have child safety concerns about themselves or any other child or student aged 18 or over can:

- disclose the child safety incident or concern to any staff member, Volunteer or Contractor. This might be done:
 - verbally
 - in writing
 - through electronic means (such as email)
 - indirectly (such as in written assignments, in artworks or in any other way)
- use the College's anonymous suggestion box (physical or digital), which is located either online or outside the Wellbeing Office to disclose anonymously
- contact Adsafe, Kids Helpline, Orange Door (Child First), Child Protection or the Police.

For more information, students can refer to the child-friendly version of our Child Safety Complaints Management Policy and Procedures, available on the school's website.

Parents/carers, family members and other community members who have child safety concerns or who suspect that a child or young person associated with the College may be subject to abuse or other harm can contact:

- the Principal, who is the College's Senior Child Safety Officer, by phoning (03) 9717 7300 or emailing principal@merndahills.vic.edu.au

- if the concern relates to the Principal, the Chief Executive Officer by phoning (03) 9264 7730 or emailing childsafety@asv.vic.edu.au.

Any person can also contact the Senior Child Safety Officer, or the Chief Executive Officer if they have concerns regarding the College's leadership in relation to child safety.

Communications will be treated confidentially on a 'need to know basis'.

The College's Response to and External Reporting of Child Safety Incidents or Concerns

Our Child Safety Program sets out the procedures, consistent with [PROTECT Four Critical Actions](#) and [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#), that the College will follow for any child safety incident or concern involving a student, College Staff, Volunteer, Contractor or Visitor, or other person connected to the College or the College environment.

It also provides guidance for all Staff, Volunteers and Contractors on their obligations to respond to and report, to relevant external authorities, child safety incidents and concerns.

These procedures and guidance are summarised in our public-facing Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns and public-facing Procedures for Managing Child Safety Incidents or Concerns At or Involving the School or its Staff.

Support for Students, Families and Staff Following Child Safety Incident or Disclosure

Child safety incidents or concerns can cause trauma and significantly impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children, as well as on their families. In addition to reporting and referral to the relevant authorities, the College plays a central role in addressing this trauma and has a duty of care to ensure that students feel safe and supported at College.

The College employs a range of measures to support students affected by a child safety incident or concern depending on the particular circumstances of the matter and of the student and their family:

- Child Safety Advocates will work with the student and their family to develop a Student Support Plan
- support strategies that could be considered for students and/or their families might include offering or organising referrals to internal or external support, such as the College counsellor, bi-cultural workers and/or translators, or an external support agency and/or child advocacy

organisation which specialises in supporting children and young people impacted by abuse or other harm.

The College offers former students who may disclose historical child safety incidents or concerns from their time at the College similar support.

Witnessing a child safety incident or receiving a disclosure of abuse or other harm can be a distressing experience for Staff, Volunteers and Contractors involved. The College assists impacted Staff, Volunteers and Contractors to access necessary support.

Embedding a Culture of Child Safety: Our Child Safety Program

Our Child Safety Program itself is one of the strategies employed by Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited to embed a culture of child safety at the College.

Our Child Safety Program relates to all aspects of child safety and wellbeing and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to create and maintain a child safe environment and culture at the College. It includes:

- the Child Safety Codes of Conduct
- clear information about what is child abuse and other harm and key indicators of child abuse and other harm
- clear procedures, that are consistent with [PROTECT Four Critical Actions](#) and [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#), for responding to and reporting child safety incidents or concerns internally to a Child Safety Advocate, and for responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse or other harm
- strategies to support, encourage and enable Staff, Volunteers, Contractors, parents/carers and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters
- procedures for recruiting and screening members of the Leadership Team, Staff, Volunteers and Contractors
- procedures for reporting to external agencies, that are consistent with [PROTECT Four Critical Actions](#) and [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#), including Mandatory Reporting to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (Child Protection), reporting reportable conduct to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) and reporting child sexual abuse to police
- pastoral care strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe
- strategies to support and encourage the participation and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and

students with disability

- child safety training
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse or other harm to protect, support and assist students
- guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality
- policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 1359)
- a system for continuous review and improvement.

Child Safety Responsibilities at the College

Child safety and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility. Specific responsibilities at the College include:

The College Child Safety Advocate/s

One or more staff members are nominated as a Colleges Child Safety Advocate. Child Safety Advocates receive additional specialised training with respect to child safety and wellbeing, including but not limited to child protection issues. They are a point of contact for raising child safety concerns within the College. They are also responsible for championing child safety within the College and assisting in coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

Our Child Safety Advocates are:

- Principal
- Head of Primary
- Head of Secondary
- Wellbeing Coordinator
- Counsellor
- Chaplain

The Senior Child Safety Officer

Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited has also appointed the Principal as the College Senior Child Safety Officer.

The Senior Child Safety Officer has additional child safety responsibilities, such as being a first point of contact for all child safety concerns or queries for the wider community and coordinating the

College's response to child safety incidents in consultation with the Leadership Team and Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited Board of Directors.

Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited Board of Directors

Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited Board of Directors is Mernda Hills Christian College "school governing authority" for the purposes of Ministerial Order 1359.

Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited Board of Directors is responsible for:

- championing and promoting a child safe culture within the College
- approving our Child Safety Program, including this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and the Child Safety Codes of Conduct

It is responsible for ensuring that the College has appropriate resources to effectively implement the Victorian Child Safe Standards, Ministerial Order 1359 and our Child Safety Program.

Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited Board of Directors's Child Safe Advocate

One member of Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited Board of Directors is appointed or identified as a Child Safe Advocate. The Child Safe Advocate is responsible for ensuring that a child safe culture is prioritised, modelled and championed at Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited Board of Directors level.

Chief Executive Officer

The **Chief Executive Officer** circulates the strategies and policies approved by **Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited Board of Directors** and appoints staff to fulfil its leadership, management and operational structures.

The Chief Executive Officer is the "head" of the College for the purposes of the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Associate Chief Executive Officer

The **Associate Chief Executive Officer** supports the Principal to maintain the highest standards in relation to the protection of children and young people. They ensure that written reports of abuse or

potential abuse of a child are received and promptly reported to relevant external authorities and Adventist Schools Victoria.

For the purposes of the Reportable Conduct Scheme, the Associate Chief Executive Officer has been authorised, by the Chief Executive Officer, to undertake responsibility for reporting and investigating Reportable Allegations that involve the Principal under our Reportable Conduct Policies and Procedures.

The Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited Board of Directors

Each member of the Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited Board of Directors is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the **School's Child Safe Policy** and the **Child Safety** Program to be effectively implemented within the School and are responsible for holding the Principal and the Leadership Team accountable for effective implementation.

The Principal

The Principal is responsible, and will be accountable, for the operational management of the College, and the implementation of the Child Safety Program. The Principal is responsible for:

- taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and the College's Child Safety Program is implemented effectively and followed
- ensuring that a strong and sustainable child safe culture is maintained within the College, including by:
 - modelling the Child Safe Code of Conduct, and reinforcing high standards of child safe behaviours between adults and students and between students
 - facilitating the participation of students, families, Staff and other members of the College community in promoting and improving child safety and wellbeing at the College
 - promoting regular and open discussion of child safety and wellbeing issues within the College community
 - facilitating regular professional learning for Staff and relevant Volunteers and Contractors about child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and preventing and responding to child safety incidents and concerns
 - creating an environment where child safety incidents, concerns and complaints are readily raised with the College and where no one is discouraged from reporting child safety incidents or concerns to relevant external authorities.

Staff

All Staff are “school staff” for the purposes of Ministerial Order 1359.

All Staff are required to comply with our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Child Safety Codes of Conduct, be familiar with our Child Safety Program and understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse and other harm, and WWC Checks.

It is each individual’s responsibility to be aware of key indicators of child abuse and other harm, to be observant, and to raise all child safety incidents and concerns with a Child Safety Advocate.

To meet these obligations, all Staff must:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and ongoing training provided by the College
- always follow the College’s child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures in the Child Safety Program
- act in accordance with the Child Safety Codes of Conduct
- identify and raise child safety incidents and concerns in accordance with our Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns, and follow the [PROTECT Four Critical Actions](#) and [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#)
- ensure students’ views are taken seriously and their voices are heard when making decisions that affect them
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

Volunteers

A Volunteer is a someone who performs work for the College in a College environment without remuneration or reward. Volunteers may be family members of students, or from the wider College or local community. Volunteers are not “school staff” for the purposes of Ministerial Order 1359.

All Volunteers at the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of students in the College environment.

To meet these obligations:

- all Volunteers must comply with our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Child Safety Codes of Conduct
- Direct Contact Volunteers (and, if required by the College, other Volunteers such as Regular Volunteers who are engaged in “child-connected work”) must:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and ongoing training provided by the College
- be aware of key indicators of child abuse and other harm
- understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse and other harm
- raise all child safety concerns with a Child Safety Advocate.

Contractors

A Contractor is someone engaged by the College to perform specific tasks. Contractors are not employees of the College. However, Contractors who have direct contact with children are “school staff” for the purposes of Ministerial Order 1359.

Contractors may include maintenance and building personnel, consultants, music tutors, sports coaches, and cleaners as well as external education providers (organisations that the College has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the College).

All Contractors are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of students in the College environment.

To meet these obligations:

- all Contractors must comply with our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Child Safety Codes of Conduct.
- Direct Contact Contractors (and, if required by the College, other Contractors such as Regular Contractors who are engaged in “child-connected work”) must:
 - participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and ongoing training provided by the College
 - be aware of key indicators of child abuse and other harm
 - understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse and other harm
 - raise all child safety concerns with a Child Safety Advocate.

The College may include these requirements in the written agreement between it and the Contractor.

Implementation

The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is published on our College's public website.

It is provided to new Staff, and to Direct Contact and Regular Volunteers, and Direct Contact and Regular Contractors at their induction or prior to them commencing their work at the College.

The College provides all Visitors to the College, including Casual Volunteers and Casual Contractors, with information about the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (including in particular the Child Safety Codes of Conduct and how to report child safety incidents or concerns to the College and to relevant external authorities).

We provide a child-friendly version of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and our Statement of Commitment to Child Safety to all students and that can be found on the College website and at front Reception.

Breach of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited enforces this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and our Child Safety Codes of Conduct. In the event of any non-compliance, we will instigate a review that may result in a range of measures including (depending on the severity of the breach):

- remedial education
- counselling
- increased supervision
- the restriction of duties
- suspension
- in the case of serious breaches, termination of employment, contract or engagement.

Source of Obligation

The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy implements, and is to be read and understood in conjunction with:

- Victorian Child Safe Standards, Standard 2
- Ministerial Order 1359, Clause 6

Policy Review

A review of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is conducted annually or earlier if required, such as if a significant child safety incident occurs at the College or due to changes in legislation.

Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited Board of Directors is responsible for ensuring that this Policy is reviewed and updated as needed and for approving this Policy.

(1) The Child Safety Program is the name given to the full collection of policies and procedures that assist the College to be a child safe organisation and to meet the requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 1359. It includes policies and procedures for:

- responding to and reporting child safety incidents and concerns
- child safe human resources management (including WWC clearances)
- participation and empowerment of students
- informing and involving families and relevant communities in child safeguarding issues
- equity and diversity
- child safeguarding risk management strategies
- strategies for embedding a culture of child safety at the College and
- regular reviews and continuous improvement of child safety policies, procedures and practices.