



Mernda Hills Christian College

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Document Control

Revision Number	Review Date	Implementation Date	Description of Changes	Prepared By	Approved By
Gilson College – Mernda Campus					
	June 2022	Jan 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General review Added Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse for Younger Students and People from Culturally and linguistically Diverse Backgrounds 	Exec Leaders	College Council
Mernda Hills Christian College					
1	May 2023	Jan 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual general review for clarity Updated Rationale for clarity Updated with MO 1359 & MO 870 - New Child Safe Standards Added Definitions of Reasonable excuse, and Substantial risk 	Exec Leaders	Senior Leadership Team, ASV Head Office June 6, 2023
2	Nov 2023	Jan 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated Information in Child Safe Standards 6, 7, 8 Added Record Retention expectations 	Exec Leaders	Exec Leaders

Rationale

Child safety and wellbeing is based on the understanding that each person is created in the image of God and is precious in His sight. There is a Biblical imperative to ensure that children are treated with care and respect as modelled by Jesus Christ (Matthew 18:6; 19:14).

Mernda Hills Christian College provides a values-based education which focuses on the development of the whole child and where the home and school partner to provide this education. In this context, the College recognises the principles of all child protection legislation and its moral responsibility to provide and ensure zero tolerance for any forms of child abuse and where the school, through its teachers, provide duty of care to prevent child abuse, and take every precaution to avoid abuse and all forms of harm happening.

Mernda Hills Christian College Principal and College Advisory Council is committed to:

1. implementing and monitoring adherence to child safety policies, procedures, and practices.
2. planning and maintaining safe and supportive environments and
3. responding appropriately to allegations of abuse and allegations of inappropriate behaviour toward children and young people in our care.
4. supporting, encouraging, and enabling school staff, parents, and children to understand, identify, discuss, and report child safety matters;
5. supporting or assisting children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.
6. sharing Child Safety Policies and the Child Safety Statement of Commitment with the College community via the College website and SEQTA portals. See also *Risk reduction and management* p.5

Further, Mernda Hills Christian College acknowledges its community is also accountable under *Ministerial Order No. 1359*, to the new *Child Safe Standards* and specific actions that all Victorian schools must take to meet the requirements in those *Standards*.

[Ministerial Order 1359 Child Safe Standards](#)

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy strategies will be transparent, well understood, and diverse, and take account of the increased level of risk associated with the specific nature of some activities and the vulnerability of particular groups, such as ATSI students, culturally and linguistically diverse students, disabled students, LGBTQIA+, and other vulnerable students.

The Policy (supported by other child safety policies) informs our school community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

The College will also follow the guidelines of the Department of Education and Training (DET) *Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse* (with

the College's Fifth Critical Action: *Document your actions*) and *Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools*, which is referred to in this policy.

All teachers, other staff members, volunteers, contractors, other service providers and School Advisory Council members must understand and abide by the legal, professional, and moral obligations to implement all child safety and wellbeing policies, protocols, and practices.

Scope

1. This policy applies to the College Advisory Council, Principal, all staff, pastors, chaplains, ministers of religion, contractors, volunteers, education practicum students, students and other stakeholders and covers information about reporting allegations of:
 - a. inappropriate behaviour by a staff member causing harm to a child or group of children,
 - b. harm or suspected harm of a student by any other person.

2. In regard to the 'Betrayal of Trust' report 2014 criminal offences legislation, under the *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.)* It also applies to Mernda Hills Christian College students 18 years of age or over.

Definitions

Relevant Definitions - General:

"Child" means:

- a. a child enrolled as a student at the school.

"Child-connected work" means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

"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.

"Child abuse" includes:

- b. any act committed against a child involving
 - i. a sexual offence; or
 - ii. an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming); and
- b. the infliction, on a child, of—
 - iii. physical violence; or
 - iv. serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- c. serious neglect of a child.

"Reportable conduct" means the five types of 'reportable conduct' listed in the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005: 1. sexual offences (against, with or in the presence of, a child); 2. sexual misconduct (against, with or in the presence of, a child); 3. physical violence (against, with or in the presence of, a child); 4. behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm; 5. significant neglect.

"Student" means young person 18 years or over enrolled at Mernda Hills Christian College .

“ASV” *Seventh-day Adventist Schools Ltd (VIC)*; also referred to as SDA Schools and Adventist Schools Victoria and will hereafter be referred to as ASV within this policy.

“ASA” *Seventh-day Adventist Schools Ltd*; also referred to as SDA Schools Australia and will hereafter be referred to as ASA within this policy.

Betrayal of Trust Legislation - Criminal Offences Definitions:

“Reasonable excuse” means a person has a reasonable excuse for failing to comply if

- a. the person fears on reasonable grounds for the safety of any person (other than the person reasonably believed to have committed, or to have been involved in, the sexual offence) were the person to disclose the information to police (irrespective of whether the fear arises because of the fact of disclosure, or the information disclosed) and the failure to disclose the information to police is a reasonable response in the circumstances; or
- b. the person believes on reasonable grounds that the information has already been disclosed to police by another person and the first mentioned person has no further information.
- c. For example: A person may believe on reasonable grounds that the information has already been disclosed to police by another person if the person has made a report disclosing all of the information in his or her possession in compliance with mandatory reporting obligations under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 .

“Substantial risk” means

- a. the likelihood or probability that the child will become the victim of a sexual offence
- b. the nature of the relationship between a child and the adult who may pose a risk to the child
- c. the background of the adult who may pose a risk to the child, including any past or alleged misconduct
- d. any vulnerabilities particular to a child which may increase the likelihood that they may become the victim of a sexual offence
- e. any other relevant fact which may indicate a substantial risk of a sexual offence being committed against a child.

Implementation

Child Safety and Wellbeing Statement of Commitment and Principles

1. Mernda Hills Christian College is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people, and is committed to zero tolerance of abuse of any kind, including but not limited to, bullying and harassment, racism, and discrimination.
2. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making. A child safe environment is one where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.
3. Every person involved in the College has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he or 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.
4. This commitment to ensuring the safety, welfare and wellbeing of all children and young people in the College will be maintained at all times during their participation in learning and other activities in all College environments, including, but not limited to, at school, on excursions and camps, on outdoor education activities, and online.

5. Attention will be given to the inclusiveness and cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, children, and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children and young people with a disability, LGBTQIA+, and any other vulnerable children and young people, as defined in the MO 1359 Child Safe Standards 1 and 5. See also *Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy* and *Diversity of Learners Policy*.
6. Mernda Hills Christian College has zero tolerance for child abuse and is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse.
7. At Mernda Hills Christian College, a child includes Mernda Hills Christian College students, visiting students and international students.
8. Child abuse includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect, and a child's exposure to family violence.
9. Broader child safety issues arising from our common-law duty of care, as well as our institutional duty of care, are dealt with through our *Duty of Care Policy*.
10. If you have a belief or suspicion that a child is being, or has been, subjected to any form of abuse you must contact the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection Service or, where you need guidance on making a report or have questions regarding child safety, contact one of the School's appointed Child Safety Officers – The Principal and Heads of Schools
11. Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.
12. Within the College, a best practice approach to creating a safe environment includes procedures for responding to allegations and disclosures of reportable conduct of children and young people, based on the following principles:
 - a. All children and young people have a right to safety and freedom from abuse of any kind.
 - b. All adults working with children and young people have a responsibility to care for them, to promote their wellbeing and to protect them from any form of reportable conduct.
 - c. When any action is taken to prevent, or respond to any type of reportable conduct, the welfare and wellbeing of the child or young person are the primary concerns.
 - d. The integrity of the family unit is respected but not to the detriment of the child or young person.
 - e. The dignity of persons involved in situations where reportable conduct is suspected or disclosed, should be respected and they should be treated with fairness, sensitivity, dignity, and respect.
 - f. In the interests of justice, appropriate confidentiality should be maintained, with information that relates to suspected or disclosed abuse being provided only to those who have a right or a need to be informed.
13. In its planning, decision-making and operations Mernda Hills Christian College will:
 - a. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety

- b. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives
- c. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children
- d. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount
- e. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children
- f. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development
- g. 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 issues
- h. Report suspected abuse, neglect, or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities
- i. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk
- j. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers

Providing ongoing support:

1. Mernda Hills Christian College will provide ongoing support for children and young people impacted by abuse - either through disclosure or who are otherwise linked to suspected abuse, through the steps given for making a Student Support Plan, as detailed in *'Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools'*
2. Ongoing student support will be arranged by the relevant College Child Safety Officer
3. Steps or actions will include:
 - a. Provide support for the student during interviews
 - b. Establish a Student Support Plan
 - c. Establish a Student Support Group
 - d. Ensure ongoing review of the Student's Support Plan
4. Ongoing support will be provided by those such as the relevant College Child Safety Officer, trusted teachers, Level Leaders, Chaplains, Wellbeing Officers, and Counsellors.
5. Referrals may be made to relevant organisations, such as Headspace, GP, or child psychologist.

Risk reduction and management:

1. The risk of child abuse occurring at Mernda Hills Christian College and on excursions, camps and other off campus environments will be reduced and managed through dissemination of this policy to all staff, contractors, volunteers, education practicum students, College students 18+ years of age, and other stakeholders, though:

- a. professional learning and training sessions (See *Child Safety Protection Professional Learning and Training Schedule*)
- b. information sessions,
- c. the Mernda Hills Christian College website
- d. documents on SEQTA Teach (staff), SEQTA Engage (Parents) and SEQTA Learn (students)
- e. relevant, related policies such as, but not limited to, the *Digital Technologies, Internet Acceptable Use, Anti-Bullying and Harassment*, and *Behaviour Management* policies, as well as the *College Child Safe Protection Codes of Conduct* and the *College Digital Technologies Policy* and *ICT Acceptable Use Agreements* will also be made available through:
 - i. The College website
 - ii. Documents on SEQTA Teach (staff), SEQTA Engage (Parents) and SEQTA Learn (students)
- f. provision of Easy English PROTECT posters and resources to children and parents, and CCYP Child Protection translated information
- g. Employment advertisements and contracts will include a reference to the *College Child Safe Protection Code of Conduct*

Individual's Roles and Responsibilities

The following are the specific roles and responsibilities, both individually and collectively, that will ensure compliance and adherence to child safety and welfare policies, practices in the College:

1. **Adventist Schools Victoria (ASV) CEO, HR Manager, Board of Directors:** System Governance; Recruitment and Employment of staff including orientation to Child Safe policies and practices in ASV schools; ongoing Fitness to teach; Monitor Child Safety and Wellbeing policy development, implementation compliance, and training in system schools; Reporter to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) and ADSAFE, ensure School Advisory Councils Members are trained in child safety
2. **All:** Adherence to College Child Safety and Wellbeing Policies and Procedures
3. **College Council:** College Governance; ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at School Advisory Council meetings; approve all Child Safety Policies; monitor Child Safety and Wellbeing Policies and Procedures compliance; monitor Staff training compliance; and with ASV, monitor ongoing staff fitness to teach;
4. **Principal:** Responsible for Reportable Conduct Scheme compliance; Child Safety Officer; Oversee review and revision and approval of Child Safety policies; Oversee employed staff training and compliance and adherence to Child Safety; inform potential employees about the College's Child Safety practices including the *Child Safe Protection Code of Conduct*
5. **Heads of School:** Child Safety Officer; Responsible for Reportable Conduct Scheme compliance; Staff Child Safety training; Volunteers Child Safety training; Education practicum students Child

Safety training, Casual Staff training as delegated; Monitor College staffs adherence to Child Safety; ensure that general staff meetings regularly have an agenda item for child safety review – to allow staff an opportunity to discuss or enquire into procedures

6. **Well-being Officer/s:** Child Safety Officers; Staff training, as delegated; 18 years or over Students' training, as delegated; some Student child safe education, as delegated
7. **College Education staff:** Adherence to College Child Safety Policies and Procedures; and deliver Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum at age-appropriate levels, including teaching and learning about respect, responsibility, resilience, and sexuality.
8. **Office Manager or Delegate/s:** Ad Hoc staff Child Safety training e.g. contractors; Management of registers for Mandatory Reporting training, VIT registration and WWCCs

Child Safe Standards – MO 1359

Overview

1. The Child Safe Standards form part of the Victorian Government's response to the parliamentary Betrayal of Trust Inquiry into the Handling of Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations 2013. The focus of the standards is to help organisations to create and maintain environments that keep children and young people safe.
2. Ministerial Order No. 1359: The revised eleven standards in effect from 1 July 2022 inform College policies, procedures, practices, and culture
3. As has been the case with the original standards, Mernda Hills Christian College will raise awareness of all staff of their obligations under the new standards by providing annual training in regard to the Child Safety and Wellbeing Standards and our Child Safe policies, procedures, practices, and culture.

Child Safe Standard 1: Culturally Safe Environments

Mernda Hills Christian College acknowledges its responsibility to actively respect, value and support the participation and inclusion of Aboriginal children and students and their families in the life of the College. It will do so through

- its commitment to a zero-racism policy, ensuring measures are in place to identify, confront racism, and that any instances of racism are not tolerated and addressed with appropriate consequences.
- acknowledging and actively supporting a child or student's ability to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights
- ensuring staff, students, volunteers, and the school community are equipped to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal students

Child Safe Standard 2: Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in leadership, governance, and culture

This *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*, and the other listed below, detail:

- a commitment to child safety
- actions the College will take to ensure codes of conduct are adhered to by all stakeholders.
- actions the College will take to ensure a child safe culture is championed and modelled across the school
- governance arrangements the school uses to implement this policy and others related to the safety of children and young people in the College
- processes that the school will use to review its child safe practices

Refer to the College

- Child Safe Protection Code of Conduct
- Child Safe Leadership Governance Periodical Review Plan Revised
- Child Safe Protection Professional Learning and Training Schedule
- Child Safe Risk Management Strategies Policy and Risk Register
- Management of Records Policy
- Privacy Policy

Child Safe Standard 3: Child and student empowerment

This *Child Safety and Wellbeing policy*

- Provides processes where students can raise their concerns regarding child safety. For example the Child-friendly PROTECT posters are posted around the college provide information for students regarding Child Safety (See p.15, 16 below.)
- Attunes staff and volunteers to signs of harm and abuse of students.

To support child and student empowerment, the College implements the *Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum - Foundation to Year 12*, and planning documents, This curriculum include strategies that:

- inform children and students about all their rights, including to safety, information, and participation
- recognise the importance of friendships and encourage support from peers to help students feel safe and be less isolated
- ensures students have access to age-appropriate and relevant sexual abuse prevention information

To strengthen confidence and engagement, the College seeks to develop a culture that facilitates participation and responsiveness to the input of children.

- Student surveys provide one way for children and students to express their views, and participate in decision-making.

Child Safe Standard 4: Family engagement

Our families and the College community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, we are committed to providing families and communities with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

1. The College community is encouraged to participate in decisions and practices relating to Child Safety and Wellbeing, including the development and review of policies.
2. Child Safety and Wellbeing principles, policies and practices are communicated to the College community in a variety of ways, including (but not limited to):
 - a. Newsletter
 - b. Website
 - c. Parents and Friends Organisation
 - d. Information sessions
 - e. Focus groups
 - f. Handbooks
3. PROTECT Child Safety posters are displayed across the school (See p.14 below.)

Child Safe Standard 5: Diversity and Equity *See this policy, Diversity of Learners Policy, Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy, Keeping Safe Child Protection Curriculum*

As a child safe organisation, Mernda Hills Christian College celebrates the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promotes respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

- We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths, and experiences to draw on.
- We pay attention through policy and curriculum to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
 - Children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
 - Children and young people with disabilities
 - Children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
 - LGBTQIA+ children and young people with other vulnerabilities as described in the Child Safe standards

Child Safe Standard 6: Suitable staff and volunteers

At Mernda Hills Christian College we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

Staff recruitment: All registered teaching staff are recruited and employed by Adventist Schools Victoria (Limited) (ASV) according to its Human Relations (HR) policies, procedures, and processes. Many other staff are also recruited in conjunction with College leadership and governance under the same ASV HR employment policies.

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, ASV Head Office and the College:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children Clearance or equivalent background check such as a Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration and Police Checks as required, e.g. for chaplains.
- collect and record:
 - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other essential or relevant qualifications
 - the person's history of working with children and essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety and wellbeing
 - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.
- Job advertisements will contain information relevant to child safety standards.
- provide role descriptions, which outline the duties and responsibilities regarding child safety and wellbeing of child-connected work at the College
- provide child safety practices of the College including its Child safety code of conduct.
- Applicants for paid employment will have child safety principles embedded into employment contracts.
- Applicants for volunteer positions will acknowledge the Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of conduct, provide two references and a completed Working With Children Clearance.

Staff induction (See *Child Safe Protection Professional Learning and Training Schedule*): All newly appointed staff, members of the governing body (School Advisory Council), and volunteers engaged in child-connected work will be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program includes a focus on:

- the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document)
- the Child Safe Protection Code of Conduct
- the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures and
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

Ongoing supervision and management of staff: All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised accordingly to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. Staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. This will be done by, but not limited to carrying out regular performance reviews, and monitoring and verifying WWCCs, VIT registrations and Police Checks, and the provision of annual training in College Child Safe policies and procedures, including awareness of their responsibilities to children and students, information sharing and reporting obligations and record-keeping obligations.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed in a timely manner and in accordance with our College and ASV Head Office policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

Suitability of volunteers: All volunteers are required to comply with the College *Volunteers Policy*, which describes how we assess the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing induction and training, and supervision and management.

Governing body – School Advisory Council: Members of each College governing body will monitor the suitability of Mernda Hills Christian College staff and volunteers for ongoing work with children by including Child safety as a regular item on their agendas, and receiving from the Principal an annual child safety report containing a schedule of current VIT registrations and WWCCs. The School Advisory Council will report to the ASV Board of Directors.

Child Safe Standard 7: Complaints processes

Mernda Hills Christian College fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct, or abuse to occur and remain hidden. The Principal is responsible for the efficient and effective organisation, management and administration of the College, including its complaint-handling processes.

1. Community Complaints: We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding. This is documented in our school's *Community Complaints and Appeals Policy*, which ensures complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly. This policy is available on the College website. The policy includes a flowchart that will assist members of the College community from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to understand the Complaints process.
2. **Student Complaints:** We have pathways to serve the needs of children for raising complaints and concerns and responding. This is documented in our school's *Complaints Process for Students* document. **It includes easy English flowcharts, and is displayed around the College for easy access by children. It is also available on Seqta student and parent portals.**
3. Complaints and concerns of child abuse: This policy and the procedures within, address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school. If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers must follow this policy and the ***Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse*** as **detailed below on pp. 13-16** to report and record using the ***Five Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse*** and the ***Child Safe Abuse Response Report Template***

4. The Principal will ensure that the complaints processes and procedures will be transparent and well understood. When resolving complaints, staff, students, and parents will be expected to take account of the increased level of risk associated with the specific nature of some activities and the vulnerability of particular groups, such as ATSI students, culturally and linguistically diverse students, disabled students, LGBTQIA+, and other vulnerable students. Adjustments will be made as required to cater for these vulnerable groups (eg. translator, additional support person, other means as is appropriate). A simplified version of the complaints process (*MHCC Complaints Process - Students*) is available for students through Seqta and in key locations around the school (eg. Wellbeing space, main corridors).

Child Safe Standard 8: Child safety knowledge, skills, and awareness

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our staff will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- our College child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices
- completing the Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations online module annually
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment.

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing, for example, training for our volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

See *Child Safe Protection Professional Learning and Training Schedule*

ASV Board of Directors (BOD) training and education: To ensure our Directors 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 school environment, the board is trained at least annually. Training for the Board of Directors is addressed in the *SDASVic Governance Policy 2023* and is a required element of the annual Child Safe Declaration that each director signs.

Training includes guidance on:

- MO 1359 and the eleven Child Safe standards See *ASV BOD and School Councils Child Safe Declaration*
- ASV Child Safety Protection Policies and procedures, which includes understanding of:
 - Individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse, including mandatory reporting obligations of teachers and other mandated reporters such as chaplains, school nurse, school counsellors etc. to report, the betrayal of trust offenses, and the obligations of the reportable conduct scheme
 - child safety and wellbeing risks in ASV school environments
 - child safety policies, procedures and practices of ASV schools services

College Advisory Council training and education: To ensure our Advisory Council is 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 school environment, the council is trained at least annually. 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 school environment
- Mernda Hills Christian College child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices

Child Safe Standard 9: Child safety in physical and online environments

A risk analysis promotes child safety and provides the foundation to inform all other child safety work, including policies, procedures, and practices. Effective risk analysis will consider all of the child safe standards and risks in physical and online environments and procurement.

By actively considering and documenting the risks in our environments Mernda Hills Christian College can act accordingly to reduce the chances of risks happening.

Our *Child Safe Risk Management Strategies Policy and Risk Register* details our analysis, and our associated child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices enable staff and volunteers to identify and mitigate risks in both physical and online school environments without compromising a child or student's right to privacy, access to information, social connections, and learning opportunities. Some associated policies include:

- Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Child Safe Protection Code of Conduct
- Child Safe Risk Management Strategies Policy and Risk Register
- Duty of Care Policy
- Digital Technologies Policy
- Internet Acceptable Use Policy

- Internet Acceptable Use Agreements – Student and Staff
- Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum
- OH&S Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Record Management and Retention Policy

The College also delivers the *Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum* within its Teaching and Learning program F-12, which assists students (through age-appropriate education) to understand and develop child safety and protection strategies.

Child Safe Standard 10: Review of child safety practices

At Mernda Hills Christian College we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices. (See *Policy Documentation and Review*)

We will:

- review and improve our policy at least every 2 years, or after any significant child safety incident or significant legislation change
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community.

Child Safe Standard 11: Implementation of child safe practices

At Mernda Hills Christian College we have established processes to:

- Ensure that all the child safety and wellbeing, policies, procedures, and practices related to the child safe standards and Ministerial Order 1359 are effectively implemented
- that the policies, procedures and any other statements and records required by Ministerial Order 1359:
 - address all the child safe standards
 - are championed and modelled by leaders are documented, accessible and easy to understand
- that the policies, procedures, and any statements associated with child safety and wellbeing are understood and implemented by all relevant staff and volunteers
- Provide students, families, staff, and volunteers with opportunities for regular input into policies, procedures, practices, and risk strategies related to child safety and wellbeing

Codes of Conduct:

See *Child Safe Protection Code of Conduct*:

1. The child safe standards require that Mernda Hills Christian College, as a provider service for children, has a code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for all adults associated with the College regarding appropriate behaviour with children. The Child Safe Protection Code of Conduct assists College leadership to enforce appropriate behaviour with children and young people in our school to help protect children from abuse.
2. The Child Safe Protection Code of Conduct informs parents/carers and other persons associated with the College what behaviour they can expect from the College leadership, staff, and volunteers, and supports and informs organisational protocols and reporting procedures should breaches of the code be suspected or identified
3. Mernda Hills Christian College will raise awareness of all staff, including volunteers, of their obligations under the College *Child Safe Protection Code of Conduct* by providing annual training:
 - a. as part of induction training for new leadership members, staff, and volunteers
 - b. as part of refresher training for existing leadership members, staff, and volunteers
 - c. to support and inform College protocols and reporting procedures should breaches of the code be suspected or identified
4. The *Child Safe Protection Code of Conduct* is available on the College website and in SEQTA Engage parent portal:
5. Staff, contractors, volunteers, and education practicum students, Mernda Hills Christian College students 18+ years of age, and other stakeholders must not cause harm to any student.
6. All staff, contractors, volunteers, and education practicum students, Mernda Hills Christian College students 18+ years of age, and other stakeholders in the school must ensure that their behaviour towards and relationships with all students reflect proper standards of care for students in accordance with the College *Child Safe Protection Code of Conduct*, and the *ASA and Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) Codes of Conduct*.
7. The *Child Safe Protection Code of Conduct* will be provided to contractors, casual volunteers and education practicum students, and other stakeholders when entering the College to work, or through annual training in the case of College students 18+ years of age and over.
8. The College has a separate *Student Code of Conduct* for children.

Practices for Monitoring Adherence to the Principles and Practices of College Child Safety and Wellbeing Policies, as well as for Monitoring Ongoing Suitability for Child-related Employment:

1. Child Safety and Child Welfare are regular items on the School Advisory Council agenda
2. The Principal and Heads of School and Welfare Officers receive notice of, and monitor with relevant staff, child welfare reports that are entered into SEQTA
3. The Principal and Heads of School, and College Advisory Council receives and analyses the student and parent surveys annually

4. Registers are kept of:
 - a. VIT Registration currency for teachers and Principal and Heads of Schools
 - b. Annual staff Mandatory Reporting training for education, pastoral and welfare staff
 - c. Working With Children Clearance compliance and checking for all others
 - d. Child Safe Code of Conduct signed by all
5. Annual staff orientation to policies, includes the Child Safety and Welfare policies and procedures, signing of the Child Safe Protection Code of Conduct (at the beginning of the school year).
6. Child Safety and Wellbeing policies and practices are a regular item during staff meetings or protected time meetings, where staff are able to have input into them. Staff are re orientated each time policies are updated.
7. Training occurs for all new education staff entering into College employment in the Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum (KS:CPC) for all who will actually teach it. Induction in KS:CPC occurs for all other new staff. (A Register of training is kept)
8. Teaching and learning using the KS:CPC includes planning and delivery of lessons on child abuse awareness and prevention, respectful and responsible relationships including sexuality, and developing resilience - all at age-appropriate levels – mainly in conjunction with the Australian Curriculum Health learning area. The College Year 9 Learning4Life program expressly focuses on developing responsible relationships and resilience.
9. Regular classroom walk-throughs, and Evidence Based Observations are conducted.
10. Training occurs annually for individual College Advisory Council members by providing them with the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*, the *Child Safe Protection Code of Conduct*, the *College Risk Management Policy and Register*, and the *Child Safe Standards* reading list and declaration.
11. The School Advisory Council receives and reviews at least annually, the VIT and Working With Children Check (WWCC) registers
12. The Principal conducts Professional Learning with staff each term on the Child Safety and Wellbeing practices.
13. Students aged 18 years and over are trained in Child Safety and Wellbeing practices, and their responsibilities as young adults; staff train 17-year-olds before they reach 18.
14. An annual training session is held for all volunteers at the beginning of the school year before they are permitted to work in classrooms or other spaces where children will or may be present. WWCC is checked.
15. Training occurs for all casual staff and education practicum students on the first day they attend the college for work. WWCC is checked and details recorded.
16. Training occurs for contractors before they commence work onsite. WWCC is checked.
17. Training occurs annually for individual School Advisory Council members by providing them with the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*, the *Child Safe Protection Code of Conduct*, the *Risk*

Management Policy and Risk Register, and the *ASV Child Safe Standards* reading list and declaration.

18. The College Advisory Council receives and reviews at least annually, the VIT and WWCC registers.

Mandatory Reporting Requirements

For greater detail please refer to the Mernda Hills Christian College *Mandatory Reporting Policy*

1. Mandatory reporting describes the legal obligation of certain professionals and community members to report incidences of child abuse. These people are called 'mandated reporters'. If the mandated reporters fail to report, they may be fined and/or incarcerated. Section 182 (1) of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (as amended in 2011) lists the following people as mandated to report:
 - a. a person who is registered as a teacher under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 or has been granted permission to teach under the Act
 - b. the principal of a Government school or non-Government school within the meaning of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006
 - c. early childhood workers
 - d. school counsellors
 - e. registered psychologists
 - f. people in religious ministry
 - g. police officers
 - h. registered medical practitioner
 - i. a nurse
 - j. a midwife
 - k. a member of the police force.
 - l. out of home care workers (excluding voluntary foster and kinship carers)
 - m. youth justice workers

Reasonable Belief:

1. A mandated reporter does not need to have proof to report any concerns that they have about the safety of a child under 16. Indicators that represent reasonable grounds to report a suspected offence include:
 - a. a child or young person discloses that he or she has suffered or is suffering non-accidental physical injury or sexual abuse
 - b. a child or young person exhibits sexually abusive or age-inappropriate behaviour(s)
 - c. someone else advises you that a child or young person has been sexually abused or non-accidentally injured, or

- d. your own observations of the child or young person's physical condition or behaviours lead you to reasonably suspect that the child or young person has suffered or is suffering non-accidental physical injury or sexual abuse.

Abuse and Neglect Types Which Must Be Reported:

1. physical abuse
2. sexual abuse
3. emotional abuse
4. neglect
5. medical neglect
6. family violence
7. human trafficking (including forced marriage).

Betrayal of Trust Legislation - Criminal Offences:

It is the responsibility of all adults in Victoria, including school students 18 years old or over to report sexual or physical abuse to police.

1. Mernda Hills Christian College will raise the awareness of all adults in the College of their obligations under this legislation by providing annual training to
 - a. All staff
 - b. College students 18 years old and above
2. In response to the Betrayal of Trust report five criminal offences have been introduced under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.):
 - a. failure to disclose offence, which requires adults to report to the Police a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child
 - b. failure to protect offence, which applies to people in positions of authority within organisations, who knew of a risk of child sexual abuse by someone in the organisation and failed to reduce or remove the risk
 - c. grooming offence, which targets communication with a child or their parents with the intent of committing child sexual abuse.
 - d. encouraging a child under the age of 16 to engage in, or be involved in sexual activity.
 - e. encouraging a child aged 16 or 17 who is under care, supervision, or authority to engage in, or be involved in sexual activity.

Failure to Disclose

1. Any adult within Mernda Hills Christian College, including staff members and students 18 years old or over, who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 must disclose that information to Victoria Police.

2. Failure to disclose the information to the Police is a criminal offence under Section 327 of the Crimes Act 1958(Vic.) and applies to all adults (18 years and over) in Victoria, not just professionals who work with children.
3. The obligation is to disclose that information to the Police as soon as it is practicable to do so, except in limited circumstances where a reasonable excuse may exist. (See Definitions above.)
4. For further information about the 'failure to disclose' offence, see Department of Justice and Regulations – Failure to disclose offence and the Betrayal of Trust: Fact Sheet.

Failure to Protect

1. Any Mernda Hills Christian College staff member in a position of authority who becomes aware that an adult associated with their organisation (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer, sport coach, student of Mernda Hills Christian College 18 years old or over, or visitor) poses a substantial risk of sexual abuse (see Definitions above) to a child under 16 who is in the care or supervision of the organisation, must take all reasonable steps to reduce or remove that risk. Failure to take reasonable steps to protect a child in the organisation from the risk of sexual abuse from an adult associated with the organisation is a criminal offence under Section 49C (2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.).
2. In the Mernda Hills Christian College context, this will include the principal and the business manager and may also extend to heads of school, school counsellors, and heads of departments.
3. For further information about the 'failure to protect' offence, see Department of Justice and Regulations - Failure to protect offence and the Betrayal of Trust: Fact Sheet.

Grooming

1. The offence of grooming prohibits predatory conduct designed to prepare or 'groom' a child for future sexual activity and is contained in Section 49B (2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.). The offence applies to communication with children under 16 years.
2. Grooming can be conducted in person or online, for example via interaction through social media, web forums and emails. The offence can be committed by any person aged 18 years or over. It does not apply to communication between people who are both under 18 years of age. For further information about the 'grooming offence', see Department of Justice and Regulation – Grooming offence and the Betrayal of Trust: Fact Sheet.

Encouraging

1. The offence of encouraging a child under the age of 16 to engage in, or be involved in sexual activity.
2. The offence of encouraging a child aged 16 or 17 under care, supervision, or authority to engage in, or be involved in sexual activity.

Mernda Hills Christian College staff need to be aware of these 'Encouraging' offences because certain behaviour may constitute grooming and encouragement:

- I. 'Encourage' is defined to include suggestion, request, urge and demand. Encouragement includes but is not limited to offering money or gifts or threatening harm. It can be done in person or by electronic communication, e.g. an adult asking a child to watch inappropriate material.

- II. These offences do not require that the sexual activity be a criminal offence. E.g. if a child was encouraged to watch inappropriate material, the act of watching is not illegal, however the act of encouragement would amount to criminal conduct.

For more information about managing and responding to the risk of abuse, see Responding to Student Sexual Assault and Risk Management in the Department of Education and Training resources.

Reportable Conduct Scheme Overview:

For greater detail please refer to the Mernda Hills Christian College *Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy and Procedures*

Who is responsible for making a report under this scheme?

1. The College Principal

To whom must a report be made?

1. The Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP)

Who can an allegation be made about under the scheme?

1. A reportable allegation can be made about any person over 18 years of age who is a Mernda Hills Christian College employee (including a religious leader and/or chaplain, welfare/well-being officer), a volunteer, a contractor or office holder of the College.
2. Allegations can be made about the conduct of people even if:
 - a. they do not have direct contact with children
 - b. the conduct occurred outside of their work.

What kind of conduct is reportable?

There are five types of 'reportable conduct':

1. sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of a child
2. sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
3. physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child
4. any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
5. significant neglect of a child.

Under this scheme the College Principal, Heads of School must

1. **Notify:**
 - a. must notify the Commission for Children and Young People CCYP

b. within 3 business days of becoming aware of a reportable allegation.

2. **Investigate:**

a. must investigate an allegation – subject to police clearance on criminal matters.

must advise the CCYP who is undertaking the investigation.

b. must manage the risks to children.

3. **Update:**

Within 30 calendar days must provide the CCYP detailed information about the reportable allegation and any action you have taken.

4. **Outcomes:**

must notify the CCYP of the investigation findings and any disciplinary action the head of the entity has taken (or the reasons no action was taken).

Notice for All Staff, Contractors, Volunteers or Education Practicum Students:

You **must not:**

1. Prohibit or discourage the reporting of an allegation of child abuse to a person external to the school.
2. State or imply that it is the victim's responsibility to inform the police or other authorities of the allegation.
3. Make or require a judgement to be made about the truth of the allegation of child abuse.
4. Prohibit the making of records in relation to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse.

Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For all Staff, Contractors, Volunteers, Education Practicum Students, College Students 18+ years of age, and other Stakeholders:

1. The procedures listed below will be followed for all forms of child abuse as defined under Definitions and Legislation Section above (p.1) of this policy (reference Education Training and Reform Act 2006).
2. The procedures apply to allegations or disclosures of child abuse made by or in relation to a child, school staff, visitor or other person connected to a school environment, including Mernda Hills Christian College students 18 years of age.
3. The procedures will be followed, taking into account the diverse characteristics of the students and the school community.
4. For Mernda Hills Christian College this would include, but not limited to, sensitivity towards religious, cultural, and linguistic diversity, LGBTQIA+, vulnerable students and those requiring further learning support.

5. It is important to note that fulfilling the roles and responsibilities contained in the 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, such as mandatory reporting.
6. The tables below define overall leadership authority at College and Adventist Schools Victoria Head Office level:

Authority
Adventist Schools Victoria (Limited) CEO, or their delegate
1. Monitor overall school compliance with these procedures where the allegation involves staff, contractors, volunteers, or education practicum students.
2. Manage an alternative procedure for responding to an allegation or disclosure if the person allocated responsibility cannot perform under clause 11(3)(c)(i) his or her role.
3. Make, secure, and retain records of allegation of child abuse and the response to it where the allegation involves staff, contractors, volunteers, or education practicum students.

Authority
College Principal or their delegate
1. Monitor overall school compliance with these procedures where the allegation involves individuals other than staff, contractors, volunteers, or education practicum students.
2. Promptly manage the school's response to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse and to ensure that the allegation or disclosure is taken seriously
3. Ensure an appropriate response to a child who makes or is affected by an allegation of child abuse
4. Make, secure, and retain records of allegation of child abuse and the response to it where the allegation involves individuals other than staff, contractors, volunteers, or education practicum students.

Incident, disclosure, allegation, or suspicion of child abuse:

1. If a student considers the behaviour of a staff member, volunteer, contractor, education practicum student, Mernda Hills Christian College student 18+ years of age, or other stakeholder in the school to be inappropriate or abusive, the student should report the behaviour to the:
 - a. Principal or Head of School
 - b. Child Safety Officer, Wellbeing officer, Counsellor, Chaplain, or any other staff member.
2. If a staff member receives a disclosure of allegation of, or suspects sexual abuse, harm, or other inappropriate behaviour about another staff member, contractor, volunteer, education practicum student, Mernda Hills Christian College students 18+ years of age, or stakeholder in the school that a student considers inappropriate, the staff member receiving the report must immediately make a mandatory report and report it verbally and then in writing to the Principal.
3. Where the Principal is the subject of the report of inappropriate behaviour, the staff member must make a mandatory report then provide verbal information followed by a written report to the CEO Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Limited (ASV).

Responding:

1. Mernda Hills Christian College will follow the **Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse** every time an adult in the College community become aware of an instance of, or risk of abuse.

2. The College also requires that a **Fifth Critical Action: Document your actions** be followed. (See also *The Five Critical Actions...POSTER* displayed in strategic places around the College.) This also includes reporting to authorities later any new information.

ACTION 1: Responding to an emergency

3. If there is no risk of immediate harm, go to ACTION 2.
4. If a child is at immediate risk of harm, you must ensure their safety by:
 - a. separating alleged victims and others involved
 - b. administering first aid
 - c. calling 000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
 - d. identifying the Child Safety Officer as the contact person at the school for future liaison with Police.
5. Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

ACTION 2: Reporting to authorities

1. As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you must report all incidents, suspicions, and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.
2. If the source of suspected abuse is from within the school:
 - a. You **must report** all instances of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor, or volunteer to **Victoria Police**.
 - b. You **must also report** internally to:
 - i. Principal
 - ii. Seventh-day Adventist Schools Victoria on +61 3 9264 7730 and admin@asv.vic.edu.au
3. If the source of suspected abuse is from within the family or community:
 - a. You **must report** to Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) - Child Protection
4. If a child is considered to be in need of protection from child abuse, or at risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability, or development:
 - a. You **must also report** all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police.
 - b. You **must also report** internally to:
 - iii. Principal and/or Child Safety Officer and

- iv. Adventist Schools Victoria (Limited) on +61 3 9264 7730 and admin@asv.vic.edu.au

ACTION 3: Contacting parents/carers

The Principal/Child Safety Officer **must** consult with DFFH-Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers.

1. They may advise:
 - a. **not to contact** the parents/carers (e.g. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parents/carers to be contacted)
 - b. **to contact** the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure, or suspicion).

ACTION 4: Providing adequate and ongoing support

1. Mernda Hills Christian College will provide ongoing support for children impacted by abuse, who either disclose or who are otherwise linked to suspected abuse, through the steps given for making a Student Support Plan, detailed in ***Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools***
2. Ongoing student support will be arranged by the relevant Child Safety Officer (ADCOM member)
3. Such steps/actions will include:
 - a. Provide support for the student during interviews
 - b. Establish a Student Support Plan
 - c. Establish a Student Support Group
 - d. Ensure ongoing review of the Student's Support Plan
4. Ongoing support will be provided (as relevant) by Child Safety Officer, trusted teachers, Level Leaders, Wellbeing Officer, Chaplains, and counsellors.
5. Referrals may be made to relevant organisations, such as Headspace, GP, child psychologist etc.

ACTION 5: Document your actions

1. You **must** keep clear and comprehensive notes relating to incidents, disclosures and allegations of child abuse using the ***Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools***.
2. Your aim should be to provide as much information as possible, including contextual information about the incident, disclosure or allegation.
3. These records will be helpful in making a report of the abuse to the relevant authorities
4. This information may also be sought at a later date if the matter is the subject of court proceedings
5. Your records may also later assist you if you are required to provide evidence to support their decisions

6. Each record relating to incidents, disclosures and allegations of child abuse will be filed against in child's or young person's record in the College student management system – SEQTA, and
7. Will be accessible only to the Executive team: Principal and Heads of School, or appropriate others as designated by the Principal
8. Record keeping procedures must follow the Child Safety Record Keeping Policy (ASV).
9. The records **must not be destroyed but rather retained securely and permanently.** (see 'Record Retention' below)

If it is believed that a child is not subject to abuse, but significant concerns remain for the student's wellbeing, the College will take further action, including making a referral or seeking advice from CHILD FIRST (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support), or to DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police.

Record Retention

1. College staff must adhere to the requirements of the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) Recordkeeping Standards, including minimum retention periods.
2. Refer to the Child Safety Record Keeping Policy (ASV), for specific expectations for the school.
3. Refer also to the PROV Retention and Disposal Authority document (RDA): RDA PROS 19/08 (2019): *'Retention and Disposal Authority for Records of Organisational Response to Child Sexual Abuse Incidents and Allegations'* **(Current Nov 2023)**

Additional Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse for Younger Students and People from Culturally and linguistically Diverse Backgrounds

The procedures outlined below will be followed, taking into account the diversity characteristics of the students and the school community.

For Mernda Hills Christian College this would include, but not limited to, sensitivity towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, religious, ethnic, and linguistic diversity, LGBTQIA+, and any other vulnerable students, including those requiring further learning support.

To support, encourage and enable parents, and children to understand, identify, discuss, and report child safety matters students and parents will be introduced to these documents and URLs in a variety of ways, including via this policy:

1. **PROTECT Posters** will be displayed in all classrooms and around the College on Notice Boards so students will see and read easily that everyone has the right to be safe and protected from abuse.

https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/ChildSafeStandards_Poster.pdf

2. **Protect Easy English for Primary Students booklet** will be available in all classrooms and the library, and the pdf version added to SEQTA student portal

https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/EasyEnglish_PrimarySchool_FactSheet.pdf

3. **Protect Easy English for Secondary Students booklet** will be available in all classrooms and the library, and the pdf version added to SEQTA student portal
https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/EasyEnglish_SecondarySchool_FactSheet.pdf
4. **Protecting Children from Abuse: For Parents and Carers** URL is provided here for parents of students, and will be available on SEQTA parent portal
https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/ChildSafeStandard5_ParentsProtecting.pdf
5. **Protecting Children from Abuse Translated Information** This CCYP URL is provided here for parents of diverse ethnicities and will be provided to parents via SEQTA parent portal
<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/resources/child-safe-standards/translated-resources-about-the-child-safe-standards/>

Accessibility and Awareness of this Policy

1. This policy is accessible on the College website and in SEQTA Portals.
2. Each new staff member, contractor, volunteer, education practicum student and other school stakeholders will be made aware of the policy as part of their induction.
3. Comprehensive training will be provided to all staff on an annual basis.

Online Safety during Pandemic Remote Learning

The COVID-19 Pandemic led to the need for extended periods of remote teaching and learning, bringing associated risks for child safety.

1. In any ongoing and recurring pandemic circumstances Mernda Hills Christian College will protect students from harm online during remote learning times as far as it is reasonably able. The safety, wellbeing and best interests of our students are of primary importance.
2. In any ongoing and recurring pandemic circumstances, the College will ensure the health and safety of staff in accordance with the College Pandemic (COVID-19) Support documents, such as:
 - a. *A Pandemic (COVID-19) Safety Management plan*
 - b. *Supporting Your Child in Off-Campus Learning – For Parents,*
 - c. *Supporting Staff With Remote Learning*
 - d. *Professional Expectations of Staff during Remote Learning*
 - e. *Regular communication letters/emails to parents.*

Occupational Health and Safety

1. Mernda Hills Christian College will protect students from harm as far as it is reasonably able. The safety, wellbeing and best interests of our students are of primary importance.

2. The school will ensure the health and safety of staff in accordance with Occupational Health and Safety legislation.
3. Refer to the *OH&S Policy*.

Privacy and Confidentiality:

Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014

1. This Act applies to all forms of recorded information or opinion about an individual who can be identified, including photographs and emails. It establishes standards for the collection, handling and disposal of personal information and places special restrictions on 'sensitive information', such as **incidents relating to incidents, disclosures, and allegations of child abuse**.
2. Mernda Hills Christian College leadership, the School Advisory Council, and staff must abide by legislative privacy requirements in relation to how personal information is collected, used, disclosed, and stored, and be reasonable and fair in how this information is treated, not only for the benefit of staff and students, but also to protect the school's reputation
3. Refer to the *Privacy Policy*

Contacts:

DFFH - Child Protection

- Northwest Division 1300 664 9777
- After hours, weekends, public holidays 13 12 78
- <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection>

Child First

- 1800 319 355

Victoria Police

- **000** or contact our local police station
- **Mernda** Police Station 03 9216 1200

References

Department of Education and Training:

- [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- [Reporting Template](#)
- [Mandatory Reporting eLearning Module](#)

Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority

- [New Child Safe Standards Resources](#)

Victorian Government:

- [Ministerial Order No. 870 – Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Ministerial Order 1359 Child Safe Standards](#)

- [PROTECT Resources](#)

Commission for Children and Young People:

- [Reportable Conduct Scheme – Victoria](#)

Department of Justice and Regulations

- [Betrayal Of Trust: Organisational Duty of Care to prevent child abuse](#) (See *Duty of Care Policy*)
- [Failure to disclose offence](#)
- [Failure to protect offence](#)
- [Grooming offence](#)

Related Policies, Registers, Plans, Templates, Programs

- Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Anti-Discrimination and Harassment Policy
- Child Safe Protection Code of Conduct
- Child Safe Risk Management Strategies Policy
- Community Complaints and Appeals Policy
- Complaints Process for Students
- Privacy Policy
- Digital Technologies Acceptable Use Policy & Procedures
- Diversity of Learners Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Internet Acceptable Use Policy
- Maintaining Teacher Records Policy
- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- OH&S Policy
- PRT and PTT Support Policy
- Child Safety Record Keeping Policy (ASV)
- Reportable Conduct Scheme document
- Respectful Behaviours Policy
- Student Code of Conduct
- Visitors Policy
- Volunteers Policy
- Working with Children Clearance Policy

Other Documents

- ASV BOD & School Councils Child Safe Standards Readings & Declaration
- Child Safe Abuse Response Report Template
- Child Safe Five Critical Actions Child Abuse Poster
- Child Safe Leadership and Governance Periodical Review Plan
- Child Safe Risk Management Strategies Risk Register
- Child Safe Protection Professional Learning and Training Schedule
- Child Safe Protection Code of Conduct

- Internet Acceptable Use Agreements
- Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum
- Learning4Life Handbook
- PROTECT Resources
- SDASVic Governance Policy 2023

Relevant Legislation:

- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
- Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012
- Crimes Act 1958 (VIC)
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004, and regulations (2017)
- The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- The Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (as amended in 2011)
- Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)
- Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012 (Vic)
- The Public Records Act 1973 (PR Act) (Vic)
- The Crimes Amendment (Grooming) Act 2014
- Victorian Institute of Teaching Act 2001
- Worker Screening Act 2020