CHILD SAFETY POLICY

**Vision**

We provide more than just an education to prepare students for success in an ever changing world.

**Mission**

To education and guide intelligence and character in order to live creatively, ethically and productively.

**SCOPE AND purpose**

The Saltwater P-9 College Child Safety Policy demonstrates our school’s commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of our school’s approach to implementing [Ministerial Order 1359](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/Ministerial_Order.pdf) (PDF, 363KB) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

It 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.

This policy:

* applies to all school staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to school council members where indicated.
* applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided by for a student’s use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers
* should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related school policies section below.

**Statement of Commitment**

Saltwater P-9 College is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families.

We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our school environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our school has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child’s safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

In its planning, decision-making and operations Saltwater College will:

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

**DEFINITIONS**

The following terms in this policy have [specific definitions](https://www.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards-definitions):

* child
* child safety
* child abuse
* child-connected work
* child-related work
* school environment
* school boarding environment
* school staff
* school boarding premises staff
* school governing authority
* school boarding premises governing authority
* student
* volunteer.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

**Our Children:**

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active members of the Saltwater College community. We will involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We will listen to their views and respect what they have to say. We will promote diversity and tolerance at this school and promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of all children. We will promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and Torres Strait islanders.  We will promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds. We will work to ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

* Saltwater College staff will endeavour to deliver appropriate education about child abuse awareness and prevention to the students.
* Saltwater College staff will endeavour to promote the Child Safe Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly for children.
* We take reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. When recruiting staff and volunteers we are aware that we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.
* All people engaged in child-connected work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this check.
* When employing staff we carry out reference checks and police record checks.
* All teachers employed at this school must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

**School leadership team**

Our school leadership team (comprising the Principal (Jackie Daniali), Assistant Principals (Michael Nicolaides, Ryan Ma, Matt Hart, Joe Doyle, Sarah O Connor and Mark McInerney), Wellbeing Team (Rachael and Victoria) and all invested stakeholders of the school is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

Principals and assistant principals will:

* ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed
* model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing
* enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered
* reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students
* promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the school community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings
* facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of responding to abuse
* create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.
* Saltwater College’s school council and leadership team will rigorously monitor the school’s adherence to this child safety policy.
* Saltwater College has specific policies and procedures in place to support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve our commitments.
* Saltwater College is committed to supporting and enabling our staff and volunteers through provision of regular training and education on child abuse risks.
* Child Safety will be a standard agenda item for school council and school meetings.
* Saltwater College has procedures in place to enable all staff and volunteers as well as parents/carers and children, to raise any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.
* The Student Wellbeing Officer will assume the role of the primary Child Safety Officer, acting as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of child safety.
* This policy covers all school environments both during and outside of school hours, including any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the School Council or the Principal.
* In implementing the minimum child safety standards Saltwater College will take account of the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable; and make reasonable efforts to accommodate these matters.
* Saltwater College will make reasonable efforts to communicate our child safety policies and procedures to our community.

**School staff and volunteers**

All staff and volunteers will:

* Participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school or the Department of Education and Training, and always follow the school’s child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
* Act in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct ([Code of Conduct Policy](https://saltwatercollege.vic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Child-Safe-Code-of-Conduct-Saltwater-P-9-College.pdf))
* Identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures ([Child Safety Obligations Reporting Policy](https://saltwatercollege.vic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Child-Safe-Reporting-Policy-Saltwater-P-9-College.pdf)) including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/report.aspx)
* Ensure students’ views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives
* Implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.
* Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
* Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
* Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
* Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
* Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
* Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
* 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;
* Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
* Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
* Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

**School council**

In performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, school council members will:

* champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community
* ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings
* undertake annual training on child safety using the Child Safe Standards School Council Training slide presentation available on [PROTECT](http://www.vic.gov.au/protect).
* approve updates to, and act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members
* when hiring school council employees, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe
* At our school, school council employment duties are delegated to the principal who is bound by this policy”).

### Specific staff child safety responsibilities

Saltwater P-9 College has nominated a child safety champion [Assistant Principal Michael Nicolaides and Mark McInerney) to support the principal to implement our child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training.

The responsibilities of the child safety champion are outlined at [Guidance for child safety champions](https://www.vic.gov.au/guidance-child-safety-champions).

Our principal and child safety champion are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

* Michael Nicolaides and Mark McInerney are responsible for monitoring the school’s compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Anyone in our school community should approach the Assistant Principal’s if they have any concerns about the school’s compliance with the Child Safety Policy.
* Michael Nicolaides and Mark McInerney are responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available
* Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and Child Safety Risk Register.

Our school has also established a Child Safety and Wellbeing Team consisting of our immediate wellbeing hub (Rachel Robinson and Victoria O Leary) on child safety. The Child Safety and Wellbeing Team meet regularly to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing. The Student Reference Group provides an opportunity for students to provide input into school strategies.

Our Risk Management Committee monitors the Child Safety Risk Register.

**CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT**

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school.

* The Child Safety Code of Conduct ([Code of Conduct Policy](https://saltwatercollege.vic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Child-Safe-Code-of-Conduct-Saltwater-P-9-College.pdf)) also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

**managing risks to child safety and wellbeing**

At our school we identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site overnight camps, adventure activities and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our school leadership team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

Saltwater College takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to respond quickly and thoroughly. Such issues can be reported to:

• The Principal

• The Assistant Principal

• The Student Wellbeing Team

 • Teachers at the school.

Our staff have been trained to deal appropriately with allegations, as well as how to support or assist children who disclose child abuse or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse. In such situations the school will follow actions outlined in the Child Protection Reporting Policy. This policy outlines our clear expectations for all staff and volunteers in making a report about a young person who might be in need of protection.

The DET guide ‘Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools’ includes comprehensive, detailed guidance and support for all staff.

First and foremost, we will ensure that children are safe from harm after which we will follow the procedures outlined in this document. This process includes making appropriate reports, following up and ensuring that children and any others involved receive appropriate support. We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using the Child Safety Incident Report form. All information is considered confidential and written reports will be held securely.

Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported to DHHS Child Protection/Police/Child FIRST Report depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

We each have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose/protect). If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

A child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)

• Behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim, is observed

• Someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it

• Observing suspicious behaviour. We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

**ESTABLISHING A CULTURALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

At Saltwater P-9 College, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

We have developed the following strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community:

* Alternatively, you can use another document to outline your strategies for this section. In this case you can link to this plan and write: Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Plan outlines the measures we have in place to maintain an inclusive and culturally safe school for Aboriginal children and students

**student empowerment**

To support child safety and wellbeing at Saltwater P-9 College, we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the school to ensure a sense of belonging by implementing our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships, our student Code of Conduct, and our school values.

We inform students of their rights through unpacking the child safety standards at our whole school assembly as well as our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships and give them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers. We ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time.

When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct or abuse of a child, we will listen to the complainant’s account and take them seriously, check our understanding of the complaint, support the student and keep them (and their parents and carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active members of the Saltwater College community. We will involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We will listen to their views and respect what they have to say. We will promote diversity and tolerance at this school and promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of all children. We will promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and Torres Strait islanders. We will promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.

We will work to ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

• Saltwater College staff will endeavour to deliver appropriate education about child abuse awareness and prevention to the students.

• Saltwater College staff will endeavour to promote the Child Safe Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly for children.

• We take reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. When recruiting staff and volunteers we are aware that we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

• All people engaged in child-connected work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this check.

• When employing staff we carry out reference checks and police record checks.

• All teachers employed at this school must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

**FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

Our families and the school 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, at Saltwater P-9 College we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school’s child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

We do this by:

* Sending our Child Safe Policy and all related policies through to a parent representative group to seek input via our communication portal Xuno.
* Once we have received feedback from our parent community, the Child Safe Policy will be shared at School Council for further input and finally shared with our staff prior to making any changes.
* all of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents at <https://saltwatercollege.vic.edu.au/health-and-wellbeing/>
* Newsletters will inform families and the school community about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.
* PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school, in the staffroom and in every classroom.

**DIVERSITY AND EQUITY**

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote 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 particular attention 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 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
* international students
* children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy <https://saltwatercollege.vic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Student-Wellbeing-and-Engagement-Policy-Saltwater-P-9-College.pdf>]

provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

**SUITABLE STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

At Saltwater P-9 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**

When recruiting staff, we follow the Department of Education and Training’s recruitment policies and guidelines, available on the Policy and Advisory Library (PAL) at:

* [Recruitment in Schools](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/recruitment-schools/overview)
* [Suitability for Employment Checks](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/suitability-employment-checks/overview)
* [School Council Employment](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-council-employment/overview)
* [Contractor OHS Management](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/contractor-ohs-management/policy).

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:

* sight, verify and record the person’s Working with Children clearance or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching registration
* collect and record:
	+ proof of the person’s identity and any professional or other qualifications
	+ the person’s history of working with children
	+ references that address suitability for the job and working with children.
	+ references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

### STAFF INDUCTION

All newly appointed staff will be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program will include a focus on:

* the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document)
* the Child Safety Code of Conduct
* the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures and the Child Youth and Family Act.
* 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 appropriately 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. Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our school understands that child safety is everyone’s responsibility. Training includes developing skills to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse. Training will occur annually and in accordance with DET training guidelines.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse, promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, promote the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds and to develop their skills to make adjustments to provide a safe, inclusive environment for children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be regularly supervised, through weekly informal walk throughs as well as approximately three formal walkthroughs per term. This is to ensure they understand the school’s commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our school and department policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

### SUITABILITY OF VOLUNTEERS

All volunteers are required to comply with our Volunteers Policy <https://saltwatercollege.vic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Volunteers-Policy-Saltwater-P-9-College.pdf>, 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.

**CHILD SAFETY 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 school’s child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices
* completing the [Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](http://elearn.com.au/det/protectingchildren/) 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.

### SCHOOL COUNCIL TRAINING AND EDUCATION

To ensure our school 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
* Saltwater P-9 College child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices

**COMPLAINTS AND REPORTING PROCESS**

Saltwater P-9 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.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our school’s Complaint Policy. The Complaints Policy can be found at <https://saltwatercollege.vic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Complaints-Policy-Saltwater-P-9-College.pdf>

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including school council employees and homestay providers) must follow our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures <https://saltwatercollege.vic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Child-Safe-Reporting-Policy-Saltwater-P-9-College.pdf> . Our policy and procedures 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.

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, we will ensure our school follows:

* the [Four Critical Actions](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf) for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child
* the [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/stusexual.aspx) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending

Our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy <https://saltwatercollege.vic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Student-Wellbeing-and-Engagement-Policy-Saltwater-P-9-College.pdf> and Bullying Prevention Policy <https://saltwatercollege.vic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Bullying-Prevention-Policy-Saltwater-P-9-College.pdf> cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

Our school culture aims for all staff and volunteers as well as parents/carers and children to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We are aware that some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers reporting allegations of abuse or that for some communication in English may be a barrier. We will endeavour to be sensitive to these issues and meet people’s needs where possible. Saltwater College has protocols and procedures in place to enable all staff and volunteers as well as parents/carers and children, to raise any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

Depending on the severity and urgency of the matter any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels which may include:

• The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) – Child Protection

• Victoria Police

**Legislative responsibilities:** This school takes its legal responsibilities seriously including:

• **Failure to disclose**: Reporting child sexual abuse is a community wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to police.

• **Failure to protect**: A person in a position of authority in an organisation will commit this offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

Saltwater P-9 College is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

* ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on our website including the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document), Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure
* displaying PROTECT posters around the school
* updates in our school newsletter as well as through our Xuno platform
* ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings.

**PRIVACY AND INFORMATION SHARING**

Saltwater P-9 College collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws. For information on how our school collects, uses and discloses information refer to: [Schools’ Privacy Policy](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/schoolsprivacypolicy.aspx).

**RECORD MANAGEMENT**

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the Department of Education and Training’s policy: [Records Management – School Records](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/records-management/policy)

All children have a right to feel safe and to be safe. Saltwater College has a legal and moral responsibility to respond to serious incidences involving abuse and neglect of the children with whom we have contact, and to report instances that we believe involve physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect.

Saltwater College staff have a duty of care to protect the safety, health and wellbeing of children in their care. If a staff member has concerns about the safety, health and wellbeing of children in their care they should take immediate action.

Implementation of this process includes:

* All members of the Teaching Service are mandated by law to report signs or risks of harm, disclosures of abuse or neglect, or a reasonable belief a student is subjected to sexual abuse or physical harm.
* Mandatory reporters, who believe on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse, must report their concerns to Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection.
* All other staff members who form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person:
	+ is in need of protection, should report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police.
	+ is displaying sexually abusive behaviours and is in need of therapeutic treatment should report their concerns to DFFH Child Protection.
* If staff have significant concerns for the wellbeing of a child or young person they should report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection or Child FIRST.
* New staff will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of their induction procedure.
* Staff will be reminded of mandatory responsibilities annually.
* All concerns must be reported immediately to the Student Wellbeing team.
* The Student Wellbeing Officer will keep a record of all discussions about a student with whom there is a concern.
* If a belief has been formed by a staff member that a mandatory report must be made, a “Mandatory Reporting Information Sheet” available from the Student Wellbeing Officer must be completed and filed in the Student Wellbeing Team’s office.
* The teacher and Student Wellbeing Officer will contact the Department of Family First Services (DFFH) by telephone as soon as possible to make an official notification on:
	+ **(03) 9479 6222 or after school hours crisis line 131278**
	+ **South-Western Region Victoria on 1300 333 232 or (03) 5225 1099 (Geelong Office)**
* In the case of international students, the Student Wellbeing Team must notify the International Education Division of the Department on **(03) 9637 2990** to ensure that appropriate support is arranged for the student.
* Members of Department of Family First Services (DFFHS), or associated support or intervention services that visit the school following a notification, will interview staff and children only in the presence of a Principal class member or his/her nominee.
* All reports, information sheets and subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and remain strictly confidential.
* All incidents to be monitored, and any subsequent signs or indications of abuse are also to be reported.
* While only mandated by law to report incidents of physical and sexual abuse, and neglect; teachers are also encouraged to report incidents of emotional abuse or neglect.
* Students, who disclose to staff a desire to harm themselves or others, must be reported by staff to the principal.
* All staff to be aware of their legal obligations

**Failure to disclose:**

Any staff member who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 has an obligation to report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence, except in limited circumstances such as where the information has already been reported to DHHS Child Protection.

This offence applies to all adults (not just professionals who work with children) who form a reasonable belief that that another adult may have committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 years of age and fail to report this information to Victoria Police.

Failing to disclose a sexual offence based on concerns for the interests of the perpetrator or organisation (e.g. concerns about reputation, legal liability or financial status) will not be regarded as a reasonable excuse.

**Failure to protect:**

This offence applies to person in a position of authority within an organisation who:

* knows of a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16, under the care, supervision or authority of the organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with the organisation (e.g. employee, contractors, volunteer, visitor); and
* negligently fails to remove or reduce the risk of harm.

Within a school setting, a position of authority includes Principals and Assistant Principals and staff in institutional management positions (for example in government schools this includes Regional Directors and other senior managers).

**review of child safety practices**

At saltwater P-9 College, we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

* review and improve our policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident
* 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.

 **RELATED POLICIES**

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related school policies, procedures, and codes. These include our:

* Bullying Prevention Policy
* Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
* Child Safety Code of Conduct
* Complaints Policy
* Digital Learning Policy
* Inclusion and Diversity Policy
* Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
* Visitors Policy
* Volunteers Policy

### Other related documents

* [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/ChildSafeStandard5_SchoolsGuide.pdf)
* [Four Critical Actions for Schools](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf)
* [Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/SSO_Policy.pdf)
* [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_SSO.pdf)
* [Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/PROTECT_Schoolstemplate.pdf)

**policy status and review**

Jackie Daniali along with Michael Nicolaides and Mark McInerney are responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy at least every two years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school council community.

**Review cycle**

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| --- | --- |
| Created date | 30.05.2022 |
| Consultation | Consultation with Mark McInerney 31.05.2022 |
| Endorsed by | Jackie Daniali - Principal |
| Endorsed on |  |
| Next review date |  |