



# CHILD SAFETY POLICY

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## VISION

Saltwater P-9 College vision is to provide excellence in learning and teaching, achievement, innovation and self-improvement within a supportive, healthy, safe and secure environment that is inclusive of all.

## MISSION

Saltwater P-9 College mission is to provide excellence in education through a caring and diverse environment that encourages the holistic development of each student. We aim to provide students with rich academic, social, physical and creative experiences that develop their full talents and uniqueness.

We aspire to be an educational establishment renowned for its vibrant community, which develops creative thinking and learning dispositions in order for our students to engage with the complex challenges of an ever-changing world.

The community have a collective responsibility to engage in the total life of the College and to actively pursue a range of learning experiences. Our ultimate aim is to develop compassionate students with the personal qualities and attributes that will enable them to face their future with confidence.

## STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Saltwater P-9 College is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

Every person involved in Saltwater P-9 College has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/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.

In its planning, decision-making and operations Saltwater P-9 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.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- ensure all children feel safe and supported at Saltwater P-9 College.
- prevent child abuse by identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- ensure that processes and procedures are in place to protect children from child abuse.
- value and empower children in decision making processes.
- ensure that all staff (including contractors), volunteers, visitors to the school and parents/carers, understand the school's child safety guidelines and how to behave appropriately with and towards children.
- comply with Ministerial Order No. 870 and the Child Safety Standards
- comply with reporting obligations under child protection law and criminal law.

## DEFINITIONS

**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 any act committed against a child involving:

- a sexual offence
- a grooming offence; or
- the infliction on a child of physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm or serious neglect.

**School staff** includes individuals working in a school environment who are:

- employed under Part 2.4 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (ETR Act)
- in the government teaching service; or
- employed under a contract of service by the council of the school under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act; or
- volunteers or contracted service providers (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary).

**Child-connected** work includes all 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.

**School environment** includes any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school;
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems); and



- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

Definitions taken from the VRQA website: <http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes/Pages/default.html>

## GUIDELINES

Saltwater P-9 College is committed to child safety. In its planning, decision-making and operations Saltwater P-9 College will:

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
  2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
  3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
  4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
  5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
  6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
  7. 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;
  8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
  9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
  10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.
- Saltwater P-9 College's school council and leadership team will rigorously monitor the school's adherence to this child safety policy.
  - Saltwater P-9 College has specific policies and procedures in place to support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve our commitments.
  - Saltwater P-9 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 P-9 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 P-9 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 P-9 College will make reasonable efforts to communicate our child safety policies and procedures to our community.



## IMPLEMENTATION

### **Our Children:**

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active members of the Saltwater P-9 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 P-9 College staff will endeavour to deliver appropriate education about child abuse awareness and prevention to the students.
- Saltwater P-9 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.

### **Training and Supervision:**

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.



### **Allegations, Concerns and Complaints:**

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 P-9 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.

### **Child Abuse:**

Saltwater P-9 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 Officer
- 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.

#### **Risk Management:**

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, Saltwater P-9 College proactively manages risks of abuse to children by removing and reducing these risks and follows the Child Safety Standards.

The school has risk management strategies to identify, assess and take steps to minimise child abuse risks which include risks posed by physical environments and online environments.

The school's risk management includes:

- Appointing a Child Safety Officer (Student Wellbeing Officer)
- Screening as part of the staff recruitment process
- Working With Children checks, Police Record checks, reference checks
- Sign in processes at the school office
- On and off site supervision of children during recess and lunch breaks as well 15 minutes before and after school – staff carry mobile phones
- ICT Acceptable Use Agreement for students
- Teacher supervision of student internet usage
- Protocols to ensure children do not move around the school individually during class time
- Out of bounds areas in the school to ensure that children are not placed at risk
- Staff and volunteer training
- Child safe environments information and awareness for visitors, staff, volunteers and contractors
- Adequate monitoring of visitors, staff, volunteers and contractors
- Refresher training for staff – see eLearning mandatory reporting module



## Mandatory Reporting

All children have a right to feel safe and to be safe. Saltwater P-9 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 P-9 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 DHHS 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 Officer.
- 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 Officer’s office.
- The teacher and Student Wellbeing Officer will contact the Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) 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 Officer 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 Health & Human Services (DHHS), 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).





## REFERENCES

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/chilsafestandards.aspx>

<http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/Pages/default.html>

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/Pages/spag.aspx>.

## RELATED POLICIES

- On-Site Supervision Policy
- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Excursions/Incursions Policy
- Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy
- Visitors and Volunteers Policy
- Working with Children Policy

## REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated on August 2018 and is scheduled for review in August 2019.