

CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY

SUMMARY VERSION

PURPOSE

Woodleigh School has developed this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy as an overarching document that provides key elements of our commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe culture and environment. **This is a summary version of the Policy.** The full Policy is available on the school website.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Woodleigh School is committed to providing a child safe and child friendly environment, where children and young people are safe and feel safe to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives. We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

At Woodleigh School we have no tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The School regards its child safety responsibilities with the utmost importance. We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, the School treats these seriously and responds promptly and thoroughly.

At Woodleigh School, particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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 those that are vulnerable students. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at Woodleigh School and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved with the School has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety. We regularly review our child safe practices, and seek input from our students, families, Staff, and Volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

CHILD SAFETY PRINCIPLES

The School's commitment to child safety is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to promote and maintain child safety and wellbeing and protect children from abuse.

1. All children have the right to be safe.
2. The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
3. The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected.
4. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in the Woodleigh School Child Safety Code of Conduct.
5. The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child-safe culture.
6. Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our School community.
7. Procedures are in place to screen all Staff, Volunteers, and external education providers who have direct contact with children.
8. Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
9. Child safety training is mandatory for all School Board Directors, School Staff and Volunteers who have direct contact with children.
10. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the School community.
11. Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
12. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

CHILD SAFETY PROGRAM

Woodleigh School is committed to the effective implementation of our Child Safety Program and ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated. We develop and implement risk management strategies that focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks related to child safety and wellbeing in both the physical and online environment. We record identified risks relating to child abuse in our Child Safety Risk Register, including risk controls and treatments to reduce or remove risks. We monitor and review the risks related to child safety and wellbeing and the effectiveness of the implementation of the risks controls annually.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Child protection is everyone's responsibility. At Woodleigh School, all Board of Directors and school Staff, and Volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. Specific responsibilities include:

Child Safety Officers

A number of staff members have been nominated as the School's Child Safety Officers. Our Child Safety Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child safety issues. They can be a point of contact for raising child safety concerns within the School (contact details available from Woodleigh Reception or the School website). In collaboration with all Staff and Volunteers, they are also responsible for championing child safety within the School.

School Staff and Volunteers

All School Staff and Volunteers are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and our Child Safety Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with the Principal, or Deputy Principal, or the Chair of the Child Safety Committee or one of the School's Child Safety Officers. Where the concern relates to the Principal or Deputy Principal, report to the Chair of the Board. Volunteers should not be left alone with students, but our policy and procedures recognise this may inadvertently occur.

Contractors

All contractors engaged by the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment. All contractors engaged by the School are required to be familiar with this Policy and the Woodleigh Child Safety Code of Conduct.

External Education Providers

An External Education Provider is any organisation that the School has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the School. The delivery of such a course may take place on School premises or elsewhere.

All External Education Providers engaged by the School are;

- responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment.
- required by the School to be familiar with this Policy and the Woodleigh Child Safety Code of Conduct.

COMPLAINTS AND REPORTING PROCESSES

Woodleigh School ensures our processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.

We foster a culture that encourages staff, contractors, volunteers, students, parents and our school community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct or child abuse to occur and remain hidden. The Complaints Policy is available on the school website.

SUPPORT FOR AFFECTED STUDENTS

Ensuring a student feels safe and supported following an incident is of critical important to our School. The School will work closely with the student, parents and carers, and our Wellbeing Team to provide all additional support services that are available. Each matter will be a case-by-case basis an individual may be supported with:

- Referral to our School Counselling Team.
- Referral to external specialist agencies.
- Family counselling.
- Academic support.

CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

SUMMARY VERSION

PURPOSE

This Child Safety Code of Conduct (Code of Conduct) sets out the expected behaviour of all adults with children and young people in our school. **This is a summary version of the Code.** The full Code is available on the school website.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Woodleigh School is committed to providing a child safe and child friendly environment, where children and young people are safe and feel safe to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives. We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

At Woodleigh School we have no tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The School regards its child safety responsibilities with the utmost importance. We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, the School treats these seriously and responds promptly and thoroughly.

At Woodleigh School, particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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 those that are vulnerable students. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at Woodleigh School and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

RESPONSIBILITY

The protection of children and young people is the responsibility of everyone at Woodleigh School. We are all responsible for promoting the wellbeing and safety of all students and must behave appropriately when they are in our physical or online presence.

SCOPE

All individuals who are working for, or visiting, the School are required to comply with the code at all times. The "School environment" is any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by Woodleigh School for use by a student during or outside school hours. This includes Woodleigh School registered campuses, online School environments, including email and intranet systems, and other locations provided by the School for student use, including locations used for camps, tours, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events.

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

An adult's response to a student's behaviour or circumstances should be commensurate with the student's age and vulnerability and the adult's responsibility for the care, safety and welfare of the student.

- **An adult should not be alone with a student unless there is line of sight to other adults.**
- **An adult must not initiate or seek contact with students outside the School environment.**

ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

As Woodleigh School, Staff, Volunteers, Contractors, and any other member of our school community involved in child-connected work, we are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- upholding our commitment to child safety at all times and adhering to our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- treating students and families in our school community with respect in our school environment and outside our school environment as part of normal social and community activities

- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they disclose that they or another child or student has been abused or are worried about their safety or the safety of another child or student
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with a disability, international students, students who are unable to live at home and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTQIA+) students
- ensuring, as far as practicable, that adults are not alone with a student – one-to-one interactions between an adult and a student are to be in an open space or in line of sight of another adult
- reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the Chair of the Child Safety Committee or a Child Safety Officer
- understanding and complying with all reporting and disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) in line with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Policy and Procedures, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) is/are safe and protected from harm.

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

As Woodleigh School, Staff, Volunteers, Contractors and members of our school community involved in child-connected work we must not:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse or harm
- develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to ‘grooming’ behaviour (for example, by offering gifts)
- display behaviours or engage with students in ways that are not justified by the educational or professional context
- ignore an adult’s overly familiar or inappropriate behaviour towards a student
- discuss intimate topics or use sexualised language, except when needed to deliver the school curriculum or professional guidance
- treat a child or student unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity
- communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to schoolwork or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter
- photograph or video a child or student in a school environment except in accordance with the Woodleigh Privacy Policy and the Use of Technology and Social Media Policy and Guidelines or where required for duty of care purposes
- consume alcohol against school policy or take illicit drugs in the school environment or at school events where students are present
- have contact with any student outside of school hours except when needed to deliver the school curriculum, or provide professional guidance after parental permission has been sought

The above behaviours are not exhaustive. For example, some behaviours may depend upon the students’ age, developmental stage or special needs.

REPORTING

Our Child Safety Program includes policies that provide detailed guidance for all Staff and Volunteers on how to maintain professional boundaries between students and adults at the School. It also contains information on how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to one of the School’s nominated Child Safety Officers (CSO). It also contains procedures for the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.

External education providers, contractors, volunteers, students or other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse are asked to contact one of the School’s Child Safety Officers. Contact details are available from Woodleigh Reception or the School website.

CHILD REPORTING AND RESPONDING OBLIGATIONS (INCLUDING MANDATORY REPORTING) POLICY AND PROCEDURES

SUMMARY VERSION

PURPOSE

The Child Reporting and Responding Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures addresses 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 Woodleigh School. **This is a summary version.** The full version is available on the school website.

To report a child in immediate risk or danger of a sexual offence, please call Triple Zero (000)

SCOPE

This policy applies to all complaints and concerns relating to child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or other persons while connected to the school physical and online environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided for a student's use (for example, sport activities and programs, excursions, camps, interstate and overseas travel.) and those provided through third-party providers.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Child safety is everyone's responsibility. At Woodleigh School, all community members have a responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children.

Child Safety Officers

A number of staff members have been nominated as the School's Child Safety Officers. Our Child Safety Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child safety issues. They can be a point of contact for raising child safety concerns within the School (contact details available from Woodleigh Reception or the School website).

Our Child Safety Officers can be contacted at any time to discuss your concerns and their name and contact details are provided regularly in our communications.

Child Safety Champion	Dan Lukies
Minimbah Campus	Rod Davies Kate Bird Liane Clements Lisa Coxon Jo Jillett Angela Loo
Penbank Campus	Rod Davies Andrea Khoza Alison Behrend Lisa Coxon Kate Kiernan
Senior Campus	David Baker Nat McLennan Daniel Lukies Haydn Flanagan Alison Behrend Angela Loo

Staff, Board members, External Education Providers, Contractors, Volunteers

All staff, Board members, external education providers, contractors and volunteers are required to be familiar with the content of this Policy & Procedures and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the Child Safety Officers.

CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse can take many forms. The perpetrator may be a parent, carer, school staff member, volunteer, another adult or even another child. The nature of child abuse is complex. The abuse may occur over time and potential risk indicators are often difficult to detect. Under the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic), child abuse includes:

- sexual offences
- grooming
- physical violence
- serious emotional or psychological harm
- serious neglect, including exposure to family violence and its effects.

Grooming

Grooming refers to behaviours that manipulate and control a child with the intent of gaining access to the child, obtaining the child's compliance, maintain the child's silence and avoiding discovery of the sexual abuse. Grooming by an adult for sexual conduct with a child under the age of 16 is a crime under section 49M of the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic).

Family violence

Family violence is defined under the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic) to include behaviour that causes a child to hear, witness, or be exposed to the effects of family violence such as abusive, threatening, controlling or coercive behaviour. While family violence does not form part of the official definition of 'child abuse' in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic), the impact of family violence on a child can be a form of child abuse; for example, where it causes serious emotional or psychological harm to a child.

Serious harm and/or neglect

Child abuse can have a significant effect on a child's physical or emotional health, development and wellbeing. The younger a child is, the more vulnerable they are to abuse and the more serious the consequences are likely to be.

There can be physical or behavioural indicators of child abuse and neglect, or a combination of both. While the presence of a single indicator, or even several indicators, does not necessarily prove that abuse or neglect has occurred, the repeated occurrence of either a physical or behavioural indicator, or the occurrence of several indicators together, should alert School staff to the possibility of child abuse or neglect.

Child sexual abuse is more commonly perpetrated by someone who is known to and trusted by the child, and is often someone highly trusted within their families, communities, schools and/or other institutions.

INDICATORS OF CHILD HARM

Understanding and recognising indicators of child harm, including harm caused by other children, students or adults (including family violence), is important to reduce child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment.

Examples of indicators of child harm and possible child abuse include, but are not limited to:

Physical abuse

Physical indicators could include bruises, burns, fractures (broken bones), cuts and grazes to the face and multiple injuries including internal injuries. Behavioural indicators could include disclosure of an injury inflicted by someone else, wearing unusual clothes to hide injuries, wariness or fear of a parent, reluctance to go home, habitual absences from school without explanation, regressive behaviour, and alcohol or drug misuse.

Sexual abuse

Physical indicators could include injury to the genital area, discomfort in toileting, the presence of sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, bruising to breasts, buttocks and thighs, and anxiety related illnesses (anorexia/bulimia). Behavioural indicators could include disclosure of sexual abuse, age-inappropriate sexual activity or behaviour, drawings that are sexually

explicit, writing stories that are sexually explicit, regressive behaviour, truancy, depression, delinquent or aggressive behaviour, and sudden decline in academic performance.

Emotional abuse

Physical indicators could include speech disorders, delays in physical development and failure to thrive. Behavioural indicators could include being overly compliant, passive and undemanding behaviour, attention-seeking behaviour, poor self-image, and age inappropriate behaviour, fear of failure, setting overly high standards, excessive neatness, and depression.

Serious neglect and medical neglect

Physical indicators could include consistently being unwashed, inappropriate dressing for weather conditions, consistent hunger and tiredness, and unattended health problems. Behavioural indicators could include begging or stealing food, gorging food, alienation from peers, withdrawal, aggressive behaviour, appearing miserable and irritable, and poor attendance at school.

WHAT CONCERNS SHOULD BE REPORTED?

Concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children can range from an uncomfortable feeling through to a direct observation of child abuse. School staff, volunteers, students and families are encouraged to speak to a Woodleigh Child Safety Officer or their Head of Campus if they have concerns and to be pro-active.

Examples of child safety concerns include:

- inappropriate or special relationships developing between school staff or volunteers or contractors and students
- inadequate staff–student supervision ratios
- breaches of the Code of Conduct, particularly if they are persistent
- feelings of discomfort about interactions between a school staff member or volunteer and a student
- suspicions or beliefs that students are at risk of harm
- observations of concerning changes in behaviour
- observations or concerns on grooming behaviours
- concerns about a physical environment that may pose a risk to a student (this includes health and hygiene issues)
- students' disclosures of abuse or harm, which must be reported to the police, DHHS, the CCYP and, where appropriate, any other regulator.

DUTY OF CARE

All Woodleigh school staff and volunteers must understand their role to keep children safe. School staff and volunteers have an obligation to avoid acts or omissions (failures) that could be reasonably foreseen to injure or harm students. Suspected child abuse must be reported to relevant authorities, the Principal and the Board of Directors.

LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

Criminal Offences

The *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) includes the following as criminal offences reportable to Victoria Police:

- **Grooming:** Grooming is an offence under section 49M of the *Crimes Act 1958*. The Department of Justice and Community Services explains that:
 - The offence of grooming concerns predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time.
 - The offence applies where an adult communicates, by words or conduct, with a child under the age of 16 years or with a person who has care, supervision or authority for the child with the intention of facilitating the child's involvement in sexual conduct, either with the groomer or another adult.
 - Grooming does not necessarily involve any sexual activity or even discussion of sexual activity – for example, it may only involve establishing a relationship with the child, parent or carer for the purpose of facilitating sexual activity at a later time.
- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. Under section 327 of the *Crimes Act* all adults who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under

16 in Victoria have an obligation to report this information to the police as soon as practicable to do so, unless they have a reasonable excuse for not doing so or are exempt from the offence. The maximum penalty is 3 years imprisonment.

- **Failure to protect:** Under section 490 of the Crimes Act, people in authority at Woodleigh School (as a ‘relevant organisation’) will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse by an adult and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so. The maximum penalty is 5 years imprisonment.

MANDATORY REPORTING

At Woodleigh School, mandatory reporters include, but are not limited to, teachers, the principal, nurses and school counsellors.

Under section 184 of the *Children, Youth and Families Act*, mandatory reporters must make a report to the Department for Families, Fairness and Housing Child Protection service (**Child Protection**) if in the course of practising their profession or carrying out duties they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

REPORTABLE CONDUCT SCHEME

The Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme seeks to improve organisations’ responses to allegations of child abuse and neglect by their workers and volunteers. The Scheme imposes obligations on the School’s Principal and the Senior Leadership Team. This includes requirements to:

- have in place systems to prevent child abuse and, if child abuse is alleged, to ensure allegations can be brought to the attention of appropriate persons for investigation and response
- ensure that the Commission is notified and given updates on the organisation’s response to an allegation.