Child Safe Commitment Statement

Our commitment to child safety is underpinned by the belief that, ‘Children have the right to be safe and protected whilst in the school environment’. Lyndhurst Secondary College champions child safety and has a zero tolerance of child abuse.

Purpose

Lyndhurst Secondary College’s Child Safe Policy has been developed in accordance with the government’s Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order No. 870, and demonstrates the school’s commitment to keep all children safe from harm. The policy provides the foundation upon which the College seeks to embed a culture of child safety, a culture free from all forms of child abuse, in all school environments. It forms the basis of the school’s procedures, practices, decision making processes, and ultimately the school’s culture with respect to child safety. This is an inclusive culture and recognizes the importance of the additional safety requirements of children with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

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1 **School environment** means 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) a campus of the school; (b) online school environments (including email and intranet systems); and (c) 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).

2 **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.

3 **Child abuse** includes: (a) any act committed against a child involving (i) a sexual offence; or (ii) an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming); and (b) the infliction, on a child, of (i) physical violence; or (ii) serious emotional or psychological harm; and (c) serious neglect of a child.
Implementation

The Child Safe Standards are compulsory minimum standards for all Victorian schools and aim to protect all children from abuse and neglect. To create and maintain a child safe environment and culture, Lyndhurst Secondary College has developed and implemented:

1. strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements
2. a child safe policy and statement of commitment to child safety
3. a code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
4. screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
5. processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
6. strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
7. strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children

Lyndhurst Secondary College has appointed Child Safety Officers who will monitor adherence to this policy and the Child Safe Standards.

At Lyndhurst Secondary College it is the responsibility of all personnel performing child-connected work\(^4\), to understand the importance of the role he/she plays individually and collectively, in ensuring the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people. This is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make. This policy therefore applies to all school personnel; including staff, volunteers, visitors and contracted service providers working within the school.

In its planning, decision-making and operations, Lyndhurst Secondary College will undertake to:

- 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
- provide support to children who disclose child abuse
- 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
- value the input of/ and communicate regularly with families and carer

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\(^4\) Child-connected work means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonable expected to be present
Policy and procedures

Policies and procedures outlining Lyndhurst Secondary College’s approach to the Child Safe Standards are outlined below. For further information, please contact the school’s Principal or Assistant Principal.

A child-safe culture

The school’s culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

Personnel understand their roles and responsibilities/Child Safe Code of Conduct

School leaders and managers will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the Lyndhurst Secondary College Child Safety Code of Conduct. The school’s Code of Conduct sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Refer also to The Victorian Institute of Teaching, Victorian Teachers Professional Codes of Conduct and Ethics.

Human resources practices and training

The school applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work within the college. We will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. All prospective staff and volunteers are required to undergo National Criminal History Records check and maintain a valid Working with Children Check.

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

The school has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report (mandatory or other) about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. Immediate action should include reporting concerns to The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) or another appropriate agency and notifying child safety concerns to the College’s Child Safety Officers, Wellbeing staff and/or Principal Class. The school will take action to respond to a complaint. Refer also to Lyndhurst Secondary College Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedures.

Risk reduction and Management

The school believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.

Listening to children

Lyndhurst Secondary College recognises the importance of the partnership between schools and parents to support student learning, engagement and wellbeing. We share a commitment to, and a responsibility for, ensuring inclusive, safe and orderly
environments for children and young people. We encourage child and parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capacity of children and parents/carers to understand their rights and their responsibilities. When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct with, or abuse of, a child, the school will listen to the complainant’s account of things and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (or their parent/carers) informed about progress. Refer to the Lyndhurst Secondary College Statement of Values: promoting healthy, safe and respectful school communities.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Considerable importance is placed on safeguarding the confidentiality and privacy of information about particular children and their families. This school collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law. The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the School Privacy Policy.

Breaches

Breaches of the Child Safe Code of Conduct or Child Safe Policy will result in appropriate action being taken. Such action, depending upon the breach, may include a formal discussion with principal class; formal action following advice from Conduct and Ethics, and/or Victorian Police intervention, as a result of a criminal action.

Failure to report or take action in relation to suspected child sexual abuse can now constitute a criminal offence.

Failure to disclose: This offence applies to all adults who form a reasonable belief that another adult may have committed a sexual offence against a child (under 16 years of age) and fails to report this information to Victoria Police.

Failure to protect: This offence applies to a person in a position of authority within an organisation who; (a) knows of a substantial risk that a child (under 16 years of age), 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 and (b) negligently fails to remove or reduce the risk of harm.

Further information refer to the college’s Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedures.

Policy evaluation and review

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework. This policy will be reviewed every two years and after any significant school-environment incident. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school community. The outcome of reviews will be communicated to the school governing authority.
Key Stake Holders/persons affected  School Community
Person/Group responsible for Policy Review  Principal Class, Child Safety Officer/s
Review Cycle  Annual
Last Reviewed: October 2016
Next Review: October 2018

Associated Support Processes and Documentation

Lyndhurst Secondary College Child Safe Code of Conduct

Lyndhurst Secondary College Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedures