

Lyndhurst Secondary College



**CHILD SAFE POLICY AND INFORMATION
BOOKLET FOR THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

Child Safety & Purpose

Creating an environment where children are safe and child abuse is prevented is everyone's responsibility; it must be embedded into our thinking, attitudes and practices. Lyndhurst Secondary College champions child safety and has a zero tolerance of child abuse. In accordance with *Ministerial Order 870 – Child Safe Standards: Managing the risk of child abuse in schools*, Lyndhurst Secondary College has adopted the seven child safe standards:

1. Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety
2. A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety
3. A child safe code of conduct
4. Screening, supervision, training and other HR practices that reduce the risk of child abuse
5. Procedures for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
6. Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
7. Strategies to promote child participation and empowerment

Lyndhurst Secondary College is committed to creating a respectful and inclusive school community where all members feel respected, safe and valued. Lyndhurst SC is committed to gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence.

At Lyndhurst Secondary College it is the responsibility of all personnel performing child-connected work, to understand the importance of the role they play 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.

Reportable Conduct Scheme

Lyndhurst Secondary College has a high level of responsibility for children and school personnel are required under the Reportable Conduct Scheme (RCS) to notify the principal or the Employee Conduct Branch of allegations that any member of the school community has engaged in 'reportable conduct' or 'misconduct' that may involve reportable conduct. School personnel are not required to contact the Commission for Children and Young People directly.

There is an allegation of reportable conduct where a person has a reasonable belief that there has been:

- A sexual offence, sexual misconduct or physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child;
- Behaviour causing significant emotional or psychological harm to a child;
- Significant neglect of a child (see below); or
- 'Misconduct' involving any of the above

The scope of 'reportable conduct' is wide and includes:

- Allegations of reportable conduct or misconduct that may involve reportable conduct include information about something that is alleged to have occurred outside the course of the person's employment or engagement with Lyndhurst SC

- Sexual offences, sexual misconduct or physical violence committed in the presence of a child (which may include family violence committed by a school staff member in front of their own child)

If you form a reasonable belief that school personnel has engaged in reportable conduct or misconduct that may involve reportable conduct, you must contact the College principal or the Employee Conduct Branch.

The College principal is required to investigate the allegation as soon as practicable, notify the Employee Conduct Branch in writing within 3 business days and provide an update within 30 business days.

The Employee Conduct Branch will then make a report to the Commission for Children and Young People.

Disclosures made in good faith under the Reportable Conduct Scheme do not amount to unprofessional conduct or a breach of professional ethics.

Neglect by school personnel

Under the Reportable Conduct Scheme, a principal must notify the Employee Conduct Branch if school personnel engage in neglectful conduct that is 'significant.' This covers significant neglect that occurs within and outside of the school environment.

Examples of significant (medium) or serious (high) neglect include:

- A first aid officer fails to examine or treat a child's bleeding cuts and bruises from falling over at school
- A teacher is overheard saying that he frequently gets his 6 year old child to look after his 12 month old when he goes out for drinks after work

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-connected work means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present. This includes direct contact and oral, written or electronic communication.

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 campus of the school
- On-line environments (including email, intranet systems, social media and all forms of digital communication)
- Other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events)

Note: The Reportable Conduct Scheme extends beyond the school environment to actions occurring outside the course of the person's employment.

STANDARD 1: STRATEGIES TO EMBED AN ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE OF CHILD SAFETY

Lyndhurst Secondary College will ensure that it develops and maintains an organisational culture that protects child safety. Child Safe leaders with appropriate training and support will be appointed.

Child Safe leaders will:

- Ensure the Child Safe policy and Child Safe Code of Conduct are implemented and annually reviewed
- Develop other Child Safe strategies in consultation with the school community and provide regular information about these strategies to the school community including students via Compass, newsletters, welcome letters, posters, fliers and the college website
- Allocate roles and responsibilities for achieving the strategies and communicate the strategies to the school community and embed an organisational culture of child safety
- Ensure that all school personnel are aware of their role in recognising to and responding to child abuse and receive regular refresher training regarding their reporting obligations and requirements
- Ensure effective processes for reporting suspected child abuse are in place
- Have child safety as a standing item at Principal class/wellbeing meetings

All personnel performing child-connected work will:

- Contribute to an environment where child safety is discussed and any concerns about child safety can be raised
- Communicate that they have zero tolerance of child abuse
- Build responsibility for promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of all children, including those with a disability and those from culturally or linguistically diverse or Indigenous backgrounds.

STANDARD 2: A CHILD SAFE POLICY

Lyndhurst Secondary College champions child safety and has a zero tolerance of child abuse.

Lyndhurst Secondary College has created this Child Safe policy summarising the implementation of the Child Safe Standards.

This policy will be reviewed every two years or more often as required. This review will incorporate feedback from students, families, staff and the school council, to ensure continuous improvement

STANDARD 3: CODE OF CONDUCT

Lyndhurst Secondary College has created a Code of Conduct that applies to all personnel performing child-connected work. This Code of Conduct was developed in consultation with the College community and endorsed by School Council. It aims to protect children, ensure members of the school community have a clear understanding of acceptable behaviours in their interaction of children and reduce opportunity for child abuse or harm.

- All staff, including CRTs, volunteers and contractors are required to sign the Code of Conduct upon recruitment and then annually.
- The Code of Conduct will be prominently displayed on the College website, in the staff room and in the visitors book located at reception.
- The Code of Conduct will be reviewed every two years, incorporating feedback from students, families, staff and the school council, to ensure continuous improvement.

STANDARD 4: SCREENING, SUPERVISION, TRAINING AND OTHER HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES THAT REDUCE THE RISK OF CHILD ABUSE BY NEW AND EXISTING PERSONNEL

Lyndhurst SC will ensure that newly recruited and existing staff and volunteers understand the importance of child safety, are aware of current policies, procedures and are trained to minimise the risk of child abuse.

These protocols will assist our College to identify the most suitable persons to work with children but will also act as a screening tool to deter unsuitable persons from applying or being appointed (paid / voluntary) basis.

In order to meet these obligations, Lyndhurst SC commits to undertaking the following actions:

- Advertising of employment positions on Recruitment On-line will include reference to our Child Safe Standards and Code of Conduct and the job occupant's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety
- All employment positions will include probation periods that assist the college in determining a job occupant's suitability for the role and for child connected work
- New personnel will receive induction into the College's policies, codes and practices governing child safety and child connected work
- All personnel will maintain current Working with Children Checks and photocopies are kept on file
- Teaching staff will maintain current VIT registration. Lyndhurst SC will liaise with VIT on any staff identified as not having registration by the required period.
- Ongoing assessment will occur to ensure a job occupant's continuing suitability for child connected work

Important areas that the College will take into consideration when recruiting new personnel:

- Relevant and verifiable experience in working safely with a diversity of children.
- A fair and transparent interview that includes reference to the Child Safe Standards and the job occupant's role in ensuring child safety
- Responses from referees including in relation to the applicant's suitability for child connected work
- Proof of identity and all relevant professional qualifications

STANDARD 5: PROCESSES FOR RESPONDING TO & REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD

ABUSE

Lyndhurst SC has an organisational duty of care to take reasonable precautions to prevent the abuse of a child by an individual associated with the organisation, while the child is under their supervision or authority.

Additionally, all members of the Lyndhurst SC community have a duty to take reasonable steps to protect children under their care and supervision from harm that is reasonably foreseeable. Any suspicions that a child has been or may be in danger of being abused must be taken seriously.

Identifying signs of child abuse

At Lyndhurst SC, all members of the school community must act to immediately report a concern or suspicion of child abuse to a member of the wellbeing team or principal class.

Child abuse may include physical abuse, sexual abuse or sexual assault, family violence, grooming, emotional abuse and neglect. See below for further information.

School personnel must immediately report sexual harassment, unwanted sexual behaviour towards a student by another student or sexual relationships where students are more than 2 years apart in age. These behaviours may be classified as student-to-student sexual offending.

School personnel must also report other concerns about a child's wellbeing to the wellbeing team or principal class, even if they do not constitute child abuse. This includes:

- Homelessness
- Risk of harm to an unborn child
- Self-harm or suicidal ideation
- Parenting problems that are significantly impacting a child's care or development
- Pressure due to a family member's physical or mental illness, disability or substance use
- Extreme risk-taking behaviour with potentially severe consequences
 - Significant substance use
 - Unsafe sexual activity including sex work
 - Violent or dangerous peer group activity

Physical abuse consists of any non-accidental infliction of physical violence on a child.

Sexual abuse occurs when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve them in sexual activity. This may include non-contact offences such as sending explicit messages to a child or displaying pornography to a child.

Family violence occurs when a person engages in behaviour towards a family member that is: physically, sexually, psychologically, financially or emotionally abusive; is threatening or coercive; or in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes them to feel fear for themselves or another person. Family violence also includes behaviour that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of, any of these behaviours.

Grooming occurs when an adult engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child for sexual abuse at a later time.

Emotional abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats. It also includes hostility, derogatory name-calling and put-downs, and persistent coldness from a person.

Neglect consists of a failure to provide the child with an adequate standard of nutrition, medical care, clothing, shelter or supervision.

Breaches of duty of care

School staff that fail to report child abuse or student-to-student-sexual offending will face disciplinary action. Failure to report or take action in relation to suspected child sexual abuse can now constitute a criminal offence. This includes the following offences:

Failure to Disclose

This offence applies to all adults (not just professionals who work with children) who form a reasonable belief 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.

Failure to Protect

This offence applies to people in positions of authority who know 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 AND negligently fails to remove or reduce the risk of harm.

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

Taking Action:

- Staff must report child abuse or student-to-student sexual offending if they form a suspicion or reasonable belief, even if they are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse. Staff must report child abuse or student-to-student sexual offending even if another staff member is aware of the information and does not believe a report is required.
- Lyndhurst will follow the four critical actions for schools as soon as they witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.

ACTION 1: RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY (If there is no risk of immediate harm go to ACTION 2)

If a child is at immediate risk of harm, ensure their safety by:

- Separating alleged victims and others involved
- Administering first aid
- Calling 000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
- Report to a member of the wellbeing team or principal class

ACTION 2: REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES

All incidents of child safety must be reported to the wellbeing team or a member of principal class.

All incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse must be reported to:

- DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police
- DET Incident Support and Operation Centre
- Principal class

All incidents, suspicions or disclosures of student-to-student sexual offending must be reported to:

- Victoria Police and/or DHHS Child Protection
- DET Incident Support and Operation Centre
- Student Incident and Recovery Unit (SIRU)
- Principal class

If the source of suspected abuse is from within the school community, the incident must be reported to:

- Victoria Police
- DHHS Child Protection if necessary
- Employee Conduct Branch
- DET Incident Support and Operation Centre
- Principal Class

If the affected student is Koorie, the regional Koorie Education Support Officer must be notified.

If the affected student is an International student, the International Education Division must be notified.

If the affected student is a former student but is still of school age, the 4 critical actions for schools must still be followed.

If the affected student is over 17 years of age, the four critical actions for schools should still be followed.

ACTION 3: CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police will advise Lyndhurst staff members what information can be shared with parents and carers. Parents and carers **must not** be contacted until DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police advise it is appropriate to do so, as this may interfere with their investigation and/or increase the risk to the child.

ACTION 4: PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Lyndhurst SC will provide ongoing support for children impacted by abuse and student-to-student sexual offending. This may include:

- A student support plan
- Formation of a student support group
- Wellbeing support and referral
- External referrals

These 4 critical actions must be followed every time staff become aware of a further instance of risk or abuse.

Documentation

Staff are required to take clear and comprehensive notes on all actions taken in response to child safety.

Where multiple staff are involved in responding to the incident, staff must document all actions taken in a central incident log. A key contact person will be nominated to lead the response.

All actions taken in regard to suspected child abuse must be documented in the modified PROTECT Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template by wellbeing staff.

All actions taken in regard to suspected student-to-student sexual offending must be documented in the modified PROTECT Responding to Suspected Student Offending template by wellbeing staff.

4-6 weeks after the incident, a review process must be undertaken by the key contact.

STANDARD 6: STRATEGIES TO IDENTIFY AND REDUCE OR REMOVE RISKS OF CHILD ABUSE

Lyndhurst SC is committed to proactively and systematically identifying and assessing risks to student safety across our entire school environment including work experience and structured work-based placements and reducing or eliminating (where possible) all potential sources of harm. We will document, implement, monitor and periodically review our risk management strategies for child safety and ensure that the strategies change as needed as new risks arise. All risks to child safety will be listed on our Risk Register and reviewed annually.

STANDARD 7: STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE CHILD EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Lyndhurst SC acknowledges within our statement of commitment that it is our moral and legal responsibility to create a nurturing school environment where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard and they are safe and feel safe. All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse.

Within this context it is vitally important that Lyndhurst staff promote the participation and empowerment of all children. When children have an environment in which they feel safe, respected and comfortable, they are more likely to speak on issues of safety and wellbeing.

Lyndhurst SC will:

- Have clear standards of behaviour in place for students attending Lyndhurst SC (SWPBS) developed in consultations with students that are widely promoted throughout the College community
- Continually build upon the opportunities and avenues for participation and empowerment of all children within the College
- Have a student engagement policy
- Liaising with student groups within the College to establish standards of care, their rights, how to raise concerns, consulting mechanisms and the various manners that they can have a voice in this area as student leaders / student mentors.
- Celebrating diversity
- Adopt a whole school approach to promoting respectful relationships

- Processes in place to ensure all staff complete professional learning on Child Safe standards, respectful relationships and mandatory reporting
- Communicate regularly with parents/carers in relation to their child's learning around rights, resilience and respectful relationships and sexuality

In meeting our obligations under Child Safe Standard 7, Lyndhurst SC will institute appropriate curriculum providing students with education on:

- Child abuse, sexual assault and violence
- Rights, Resilience and Respectful Relationships
- Health information including sexuality education (Safe Landing) and mental health
- School wide positive behaviour support (SWPBS)

Key stakeholders affected

School Community

Person/group responsible for policy review

Child Safety Officers

Review Cycle

Every two years

Last reviewed: September 2018

Please refer to the following for further information:

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

Lyndhurst Secondary College Child Safe Code of Conduct

Lyndhurst Secondary College Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedures

