



### Rationale

The Child Safe Policy reflects Sunbury Downs College response to the **Child Safe Standards expressed within the Ministerial Order 870**. The Policy ensures child safety provisions are in place and responsibilities and expectations are identified and communicated to staff, students, parents/Guardians and the wider school community.

The policy promotes inclusion as it takes into account the diversity of all students including but not limited to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with disabilities and those who are vulnerable. Overall, this policy describes the College's commitment to keep children safe from harm. For the purpose of this policy, child safety encompasses matters related to:

- Protecting our students 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.

The policy forms an essential element of the overall Victorian Government's response to the recommendations of Betrayal of Trust Report, which found that more must be done to prevent and respond to the Child Abuse in our community. The policy defines what constitute acceptable and unacceptable behaviour by staff within our College. **There is zero tolerance of child abuse** at our College and the expectations embedded in this policy must be adhered to by all members of the School community, including staff, contractors and volunteers, parents and families, visitors and children.

Whilst this policy forms the College's response to Standard 2 of the Ministerial Order 870, it also provides a wider context as it informs and communicates the College's **expectations and responses against all seven Standards** in our practice, policies development, human resources and recruitment, training and induction of new and existing staff.

The policy promotes all DET accountability measures pertaining to child safe standards, as described in Section 5- Ministerial Order 870:

- **Standard 1:** Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety;
- **Standard 2: Child Safe Policy** or statement of commitment to child safety;
- **Standard 3:** a child safety code of conduct that establishes clear expectations;
- **Standard 4:** screening, supervision, training, and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse;
- **Standard 5:** processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse;
- **Standard 6:** strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse; and
- **Standard 7:** strategies to promote child participation and empowerment.

This policy must be read in conjunction with other key documents developed by the College, including but not limited to the following:

- Child Safe Code of Conduct (see appendix A)
- Child Safe Incident Report (see appendix B)
- SDC Philosophy Statement (see appendix C)

This policy, including the three key documents outlined above, describe the overall College's expectations pertaining to child safety. These are published on Compass and are displayed in prominent locations in all school environments (eg



school buildings, website, online forums, and camp locations). The policy is communicated to the School community via the School Newsletter and will be made accessible to all staff including contractors and volunteers, visitors, parents and children.

### Commitment to Child Safety

The College is committed to child safety. More specifically, the College is committed to the values & principles; actions, support & understanding; and the requirements for disclosure outlined in Section 8 of the Ministerial Order 870.

As a community we want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. **There is zero tolerance of child abuse**, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our structured policies and procedures.

Sunbury Downs College has specific policies, procedures and training in places that support the leadership team, staff and volunteers. The College is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks. We have structured human resources and recruitment practices for staff and volunteers as well as regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks. As a community we support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

**If a belief is formed that a child is at immediate risk of abuse staff are encouraged to contact the Police on: 000.**

### Staff Code of Conduct

The policy informs the Code of Conduct at Sunbury Downs College, through which staff and volunteers are guided on how to behave with children in our College. **All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our Code of Conduct** which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

### Training and Supervision of Staff

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that **child safety is everyone's responsibility**.

The College's culture aims for all staff in addition to parents/carers and children to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees will be inducted to ensure they understand Sunbury Downs College's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

**Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels**, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

### Volunteers

Sunbury Downs College actively connects within and outside of the local community with the core objective of enhancing the learning experiences of our curriculum and programs for students. The College has developed a well-structured process for broadening the awareness and understanding of the College's Child Safe Policy. The College will provide



volunteers with access to information contained within this policy through a range of strategies that include, but are not limited to, induction training, accessing to the Child Safe Policy and other relevant documents via the College website. The staff at Sunbury Downs College will actively work with members of the community to support the objectives of this policy. For example, the College will provide communication of the policy to workplaces settings (see Work Experience / Structured Workplace Learning Policy).

### Recruitment

The College takes all 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. Sunbury Downs College understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are be required to hold a Working with Children Check unless exempted under the Working with Children Act 2005 (Amended 16 March 2016) (Part 3 – Section 27/28 volunteers and visitors) The College requires evidence of this Check unless an exemption may otherwise exist.

Volunteers and part-time staff interested in work at Sunbury Downs College are required to acquire a Working with Children Check. Please visit the website <[www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au)> for further information, or simply contact Sunbury Downs College HR department for details.

We carry out reference checks and require proof of police record checks where applicable to ensure that we are recruiting the right people.

### Fair Procedures for Personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence. We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form<sup>1</sup>, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

### Privacy

Sunbury Downs College is committed to respecting the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

### Legislative Responsibilities

Sunbury Downs College takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

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<sup>1</sup> Sunbury Downs College Incident Report Form



- **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 the police.**<sup>2</sup>
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.<sup>3</sup>
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.<sup>4</sup>

### Risk management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (**for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations where this communication is of a social nature and not specifically linked to the College's curriculum or school activities**).

### Review Procedures

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur.

### Allegations, Concerns and Complaints & alignment with Section 11-Ministerial Order 870

Sunbury Downs College takes all allegations seriously. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations. 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. **We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place.**

Staff are required to familiarise themselves with Sunbury Downs College Code of Conduct and Child Safe Incident Report. **The College governing authority for responding to and reporting allegations of suspected child abuse are assigned to the Assistant Principals.** The Principal Class have the ultimate responsibility for promptly manage the College's response to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse and ensuring the allegation or disclosure is taken seriously. The **responsibility is extended to include all staff** responding to a child who makes or is affected by an allegation of child abuse. The overall monitoring of the overall College compliance against Section 11 of the Ministerial Order 870 rests with the high governing authority at the College, the Principal Class.

### Response to Allegations

Through the Assistant Principals, the College's procedures to a child abuse allegation will ensure the implementation of Section 11-Ministerial Order 870 through:

<sup>2</sup> A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed.

Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence) <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>.

<sup>3</sup> Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence) <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence>.

<sup>4</sup> Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about [how to make a report to child protection](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first) <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first>.



- Appropriate authorities are notified about the allegation, and this is not to be limited to mandatory reporting;
- Protection of any student that is connected to the alleged child abuse until the allegation is resolved;
- Records of the allegation are secure and retained together with the College's response;
- Staff are not discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse;
- Staff are not required to make a judgement about the truth of the allegation of child abuse; and
- Procedures do not imply that it is the victim's responsibility to inform the police or other authorities of the allegation.

### **Risk Management**

The risk management strategies regarding child safety are embedded with our overall response to an allegation, as described in Section 12-Ministerial Order 870, through:

- Identification and mitigation of the risk(s) of child abuse;
- Actions taken by the College to reduce or remove the risks (risk controls);
- Monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of risks controls; and
- Annual training to College staff about individual and collective obligations and responsibility for managing the risk of child abuse, child abuse risks in school environment, and the College's current safety standards.

### **Communication of Strategies**

The Assistant Principals at Sunbury Downs College will communicate strategies to promote child empowerment and participation through education programs as in Section 13-Ministerial Order 870. The education programs will be aimed at:

- Promotion of standards of behaviour for students attending the College;
- Promotion of healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality);
- Resilience;
- Child abuse awareness and prevention; and
- Promotion of child safety standards in ways that are accessible, easy to understand, and user friendly to children.


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<sup>5</sup>
- Someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- Observing suspicious behaviour.

The policy will be reviewed as part of the school's policy review cycle.

<sup>5</sup> For example behaviour, please see [An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards:](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc)  
<www.dhs.vic.gov.au/\_\_data/assets/word\_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards\_overview.doc>



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