

CHILD SAFE POLICY

Last Ratified by School Council: June 2019

Review Date:2022

Rationale and Purpose

Laverton P-12 College is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making. The VRQA child safe standards require organisations that provide services for children to have a child safe policy or a statement of commitment to child safety. This policy will be publicly available to help raise awareness about the importance of child safety in our College and demonstrate our commitment to protecting children from abuse.

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Laverton P-12 College has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Laverton P-12 College is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and they are empowered where 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.

Our school values of Learning, Belonging and Succeeding uphold our school's approach to creating a child safe organisation where students are safe, feel safe and are respectful, responsible and resilient.

Principles

In its planning, decision-making and operations Laverton P-12 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.

Scope and Audience

Every person involved in Laverton P-12 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 are at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

- Our students

Laverton P-12 College promotes inclusion, values diversity and creates effective, positive relationships. Students are empowered to 'speak up' and not be silent about their safety or the safety of other students at our college.

-Our staff

Laverton P-12 College is training staff to understand and promote the processes within this policy and to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse.

-Our parents, carers and families

Laverton P-12 College promotes parent advocacy for their children. We will advise parents of our child safe policy and have it available on our website. It is important for our school to support parents alongside the need to follow mandatory reporting procedures.

Policy and Procedures

- **A child-safe culture:** Our school's culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden. These policies and practices support the creation and maintenance of a child safe culture:
 - -Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy
 - -Duty of Care Policy
 - -Mandatory Reporting Policy
 - -Bullying and Harassment Policy
 - -School Camps Policy
 - -Contractor Management Policy
 - -Volunteer Workers Policy
 - -Visitors to the School Policy
 - -Display of 'Speak up' type posters
- **Personnel understand their roles and responsibilities/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 school's Child Safety Code of Conduct which sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.
- **Human resources practises and training:** Our 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 with children. 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:** Laverton P-12 College has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. Immediate action should include reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection or another appropriate agency and notifying the principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for

those concerns. The school will take action to respond to a complaint. The school's policy and procedures for reporting a child safety concern or complaint can be found on the school's website.

- **Risk reduction and management**: Laverton P-12 College 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 will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.
- **Listening to children**: Our school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/carers. We encourage child and parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability 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 to understand and keep the child (and/or their parents/carers) informed about progress. We will advise students, staff and our families of what to do and who to tell if they observe any inappropriate behaviour.
- **Confidentiality and Privacy**: Laverton P-12 College 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 our Privacy Policy.

Definitions

Ministerial Order 870 provides definitions, including:

Child abuse includes—

- any act committed against a child involving:
 - a sexual offence or
 - an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
- the infliction, on a child, of:
 - physical violence or
 - serious emotional or psychological harm
 - serious neglect of a child.

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.

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.

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
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- 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).

School staff being: an individual working in a school environment who is:

- directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority;

- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary); or
- a minister of religion.

Related Policies and Documents

[School Policy & Advisory Guide – Duty of Care](#)

[School Policy & Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations](#)

[DET Child Wellbeing and Safety Framework](#)

[Laverton P-12 College Privacy Policy](#)

Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s yearly review cycle or if the guidelines change
- 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. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school community.

This policy was ratified, endorsed, approved by School Council on 16 June 2020