



Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Harkaway Hills College has developed this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy as an overarching document that provides key elements of our approach to protecting children from abuse. It forms the foundation of the College's procedures, practices, decision-making processes and ultimately the College's culture with respect to child safety.

The College's Child Protection Policy has been approved and endorsed by the College's Board of PARED (Victoria) and is regularly reviewed by the Board.

OBJECTIVES

This Policy provides the framework for:

- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child safety within the College
- the creation of a positive and robust child safe culture
- the promotion and open discussion of child safety issues within the College
- compliance with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child safety in Victoria.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Harkaway Hills College 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.

At Harkaway Hills College we have a zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The College regards its child safety responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child safety laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture.

CHILD SAFE VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

The College'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 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 and their diversity must be respected.
4. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Safe Code of Conduct and Staff and Student Professional Boundaries policy.
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 the College community.
7. Procedures are in place to screen all staff, Direct Contact Volunteers**, Third- Party Contractors and External Education Providers who have direct contact with children.
8. Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
9. Training is mandatory for all Board of PARED (Victoria) members, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers.
10. Parents and Students receive information and Child Safety awareness and education.
11. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the College community.
12. Children from **culturally or linguistically** diverse backgrounds and **vulnerable** children have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
13. Children who have any kind of **disability** have the right to special care and support.

***Direct Contact Volunteers are those volunteers who are involved in providing support, guidance and supervision directly to students and could potentially have direct contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service.*

The Worker Screen Act 2020 (Vic) defines "direct contact" as any contact between a person and a child (aged under 18) that involves:

- *physical contact;*
- *face to face contact;*
- *contact by post or other written communication;*
- *contact by telephone or other oral communication; or*
- *contact by email or other electronic communication.*

Examples of Direct Contact Volunteer activities may include volunteers involved in College camps and excursions, coaching sporting teams or assisting in learning activities.

CHILD SAFETY PROGRAM

Harkaway Hills College is committed to the effective implementation of our **Child Safety Program** and ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated. We adopt a risk management approach by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety risks based

on a range of factors including the nature of our College's activities, physical and online environments and the characteristics of the student body.

Our Child Safety Program relates to all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse. It includes:

- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and associated key risk indicators
- clear procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse
- strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, Volunteers, Third-Party Contractors, External Education Providers, parents/carers and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters
- procedures for recruiting and screening Board of PARED (Victoria) members, staff, Direct Contact Volunteers, Third-Party Contractors and External Education Providers
- procedures for reporting reportable conduct and/or misconduct
- pastoral care strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe
- policies with respect to diversity, cultural diversity, students with disabilities and vulnerable children
- a child safety training program
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children
- guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality
- policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Victorian Child Safe Standards)
- a system for continuous review and improvement.

As a part of Harkaway Hills College's induction process, all staff and Direct Contact Volunteers are required to complete a selection of training modules on the content of our Child Safety Program.

Additional, ongoing child safety training at least annually.

Staff, Volunteers, Third-Party Contractors and External Education Providers are supported and supervised by the College's Child Protection Officers to ensure that they are compliant with the College's approach to child safety.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Child safety is everyone's responsibility. At Harkaway Hills College, the Board of PARED (Victoria) and staff, as well as Volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children.

Specific responsibilities include:

The **Board of PARED (Victoria)**:

- has ultimate responsibility for the detection and prevention of child abuse;
- is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place;
- is responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies, procedures and codes of conduct are in place;
- is responsible for ensuring that appropriate training is provided to Board members and to staff members.

Each member of the Board of PARED (Victoria) is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the College's Child Protection Policy and the Child Safety Program to be effectively implemented within the College and are responsible for holding the Principal and the Management Team accountable for effective implementation.

The **Principal** is responsible for:

- holds the position of **Child Safety Officer** for the College
- promoting child safety at all times
- taking action to implement all College policies, procedures, codes of conduct and other control systems
- ensuring that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and the existence and applicability of the College's **Child Safe Code of Conduct**
- ensuring that all adults within the College community are aware of their obligation to report suspected sexual abuse of a child in accordance with the criminal law, mandatory reporting regime and the College's own policies and procedures
- assessing the risk of child abuse in each school environment, implementing strategies to eradicate or minimise any risks to the extent possible and reporting on these assessments and strategies to the Board
- facilitating the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities, and responding to and investigating reports of child abuse in accordance with the College's grievance policies and procedures
- providing support for staff, contractors and volunteers in undertaking their child protection responsibilities.

The Principal is responsible, and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Protection Policy and the College's Child Safety Program are implemented

effectively and that a strong and sustainable child safety culture is maintained within the College.

THE COLLEGE'S CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER

The Principal has been nominated as the College's Child Protection Officer. Our Child Protection Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child safety issues. They are the first point of contact for raising child safety concerns within the College. They are also responsible for championing child safety within the College and assisting in coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

All **staff/volunteers/contractors** share in the responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse, and must:

- promote child safety at all times, and a school environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety
- familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, this policy and the College's Child Safe Code of Conduct, and comply with all requirements
- be familiar with the types of abuse that might occur within their area of responsibility and be alert for any indications of such conduct
- facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities;
- report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to Principal in accordance with the College's grievance policies and procedures, as well as to the relevant authorities as required (such as the police and/or the state-based child protection service) and fulfil their obligations as mandatory reporters.

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| Staff Members | All staff are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection 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 one of the College's Child Protection Officers. |
| Direct Contact Volunteers | All Direct Contact Volunteers, as defined in this policy, are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Safety Program, particularly this Child Protection Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct, 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 College's Child Protection Officers. |
| Indirect Contact Volunteers | Indirect Contact Volunteers are those volunteers who are involved in providing support and services whilst not directly assisting a specific group of students. All Indirect Contact Volunteers are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment. |

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| | <p>All Indirect Contact Volunteers are required by the College to be familiar with our Child Protection Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct. Examples of Indirect Contact Volunteer activities may include assisting with College administrative functions.</p> |
| Third-Party Contractors | <p>All Third-Party Contractors engaged by the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.</p> <p>Third-Party Contractors include, for example, maintenance and building personnel, consultants, casual teachers, tutors, sports coaches and College cleaners.</p> <p>This also includes music teachers and other extra-curricular teachers and instructors who are engaged by students and their families directly, rather than the College, but have an agreement with the College to use the College's facilities.</p> <p>All Third-Party Contractors engaged by the College are required by the College to be familiar with our Child Protection Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct.</p> <p>The College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the Third-Party Contractor.</p> |
| External Education Providers | <p>An External Education Provider is any organisation that the College has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the College.</p> <p>The delivery of such a course may take place on College premises or elsewhere.</p> <p>All External Education Providers engaged by the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.</p> <p>All External Education Providers engaged by the College are required by the College to be familiar with our Child Protection Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct.</p> <p>Harkaway Hills College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the External Education Provider.</p> |

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE CONCERNS

Our Child Safety Program provides detailed guidance for the Board of PARED (Victoria), staff and Direct Contact Volunteers as to how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to one of our College's nominated Child Protection Officers. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.

Staff, Third-Party Contractors, External Education Providers, Volunteers, students, parents/carers and other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject

to abuse or grooming are asked to contact the College's Senior Child Protection Officer, 0411 509 922 Email: LLCPrincipal@pared.vic.edu.au . Communications will be treated confidentially on a "need to know basis".

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.

PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Instances of student sexual offending can cause trauma and significantly impact on the mental health and wellbeing of students involved, and College community members.

In addition to reporting incidents of student sexual offending, and communication with parents/carers, the College must provide ongoing support to students, staff, volunteers and other members of the College community affected by the incident.

Support for affected students (including victims of the offending, or those who engaged in the offending) can include direct support from wellbeing professionals including the College Mentors, referral to external wellbeing professionals, support during any Police or DFFH Child Protection interviews with the student, and should also include the development of a Student Support Plan.

Where appropriate, this ongoing support should be provided in partnership with affected students' parents/carers.

Whilst a child's background should not impact on a decision to report alleged or suspected abuse, neglect or grooming, you should be sensitive to a child's individual circumstances when providing support and working with parents/carers impacted by abuse. Before creating a Student Support Plan, special consideration needs to be taken for students who:

- have a disability
- identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- are from culturally or linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds
- have refugee backgrounds
- are overseas students.

Supporting diversity. The College is committed to providing inclusive support for all members of the school community. Where needed, interpreters will be made available for non-English speaking students and families, and a support network will be provided taking into consideration the diverse needs of our community.

Support must also be provided to staff and volunteers impacted by student sexual offending. Staff and volunteers can contact Independent Schools Victoria on (03) 9825 7200 for more information about wellbeing support.

You must record the planned actions to be taken to support all students involved in the student sexual offending.

CULTURAL SAFETY

Harkaway Hills College is committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, values and practices are respected.

The College considers how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, the College recognises the link between culture, identity and safety, and actively creates opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, their families and their communities (including local Aboriginal communities relevant to the College) to have a voice and presence in the College's planning, policies, and activities.

Student Empowerment and Participation

Harkaway Hills College is a child safe organisation, where every child is individually supported. Through the personalised education model, which includes a direct partnership with parents and an individualised mentorship program, the College works to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our approach to child safety wellbeing.

The College ensures that our physical, virtual and online environments are friendly and welcoming to all children and young people.

The College actively seeks to include students in decisions that affect them. This includes decisions about organisational planning, delivery of services, management of facilities, and classroom learning and assessment environments.

The College ensure that students know about their rights to safety, information and participation, constantly seeking to understand what makes students feel safe in the College, and regularly communicates with students about what they can do if they feel unsafe.

The College recognise the importance of friendships and encourages respectful relationships, strong friendships and support from peers.

PARENT/CARER, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Harkaway Hills College recognises that parents and carers have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their children. The College ensures that they have opportunities to participate in decisions affecting their children.

The College ensure that families and relevant communities that make up our Staff and student cohort, know about College operations and policies, including the **Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy**, the **Child Safe Code of Conduct**, the **Staff and Student Professional Boundaries** document, as well as mandatory reporting, record keeping, risk management, and complaints and investigation processes.

The College actively seeks to include families and relevant communities in decisions about organisational planning, delivery of services, management of facilities, and learning and assessment environments.

DIVERSITY AND EQUITY

Harkaway Hills College recognises the value and dignity of every member of the College community. The College values diversity and does not tolerate any discriminatory practices. To achieve this, we:

- promote and support the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families
- promote and support the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students from all backgrounds and their families
- promote the safety of all vulnerable children
- support students and families from a diversity of cultures, abilities and identities
- seek to recruit a workforce that reflects a diversity of cultures, abilities and identities
- ensure that all Staff, Direct Contact Volunteers and Direct Contact Contractors have training communities with particular experiences or needs
- have a physical environment that actively celebrates diverse cultures and recognises cultural difference
- commit to ensuring that our facilities promote the inclusion of students of all abilities

POLICY AND PROGRAM REVIEW

Harkaway Hills College is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Safety Program. The Program is regularly reviewed for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child safety related laws, regulations and standards.

Last reviewed: January 2023