



Child Safety Program

Child abuse, neglect and family violence devastate children and communities across Australia. Children are powerless to stop abuse, yet we as adults can prevent it. Australian Childhood Foundation, www.childhood.org.au

Harkaway Hills College has developed policies, procedures, measures and practices in accordance with Ministerial Order No. 870 Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in school.

The College's policies, procedures, measures and practices have been approved and endorsed by the College's Board of PARED (Victoria) and is regularly reviewed by the Board.

Key Policies

- Child Protection Policy
- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Staff and Student Professional Boundaries
- Policies and Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Allegations of Child Abuse
- Child Safety Record Keeping
- Child Safe Training Policy
- Working with Children Check Policy
- Conduct that is reportable to VIT Policy
- The spirit and key features of Harkaway Hills College: Student welfare and pastoral care policy

Support Material

- Child Safe Standards Action List
- Child Safety Risk Register
- Ministerial Order No. 870 Child Safe Standards Checklist

Context

The fundamental purpose of Harkaway Hills College is to support parents in the education of their children – an education that results in virtuous adults of solid character. The College provides the academic components of each child's broader education, which remains firmly embedded within the family's education of the child in virtue and character. The College offers support to parents to ground themselves more resolutely in virtue and character, so that they can parent more effectively.

The College and its staff members pursue these purposes vigorously, and renew their goals daily, when reinforcing the weekly virtues statements (mottos), goal setting with children in fortnightly tutorials, convening key parent functions, conducting professional development for staff members and promoting development opportunities for parents, and in many other small yet significant actions.

In the context of this well entrenched culture, it is self-evident that **there is neither scope nor tolerance for abuse of children in any shape or form at Harkaway Hills College.** To facilitate or condone abuse in any way would tear asunder the very *raison d'être* of the school community. To abuse a child is to strip her dignity from her, deny her freedom, contradict her self confidence and destroy her trust in goodness.



In sharp contrast, every aspect of our College community strives to build trust, engender deep self confidence, educate and foster true freedom and recognise every person's inalienable dignity.

Definitions

The following definitions are adjusted from the Victorian Ministerial Order No. 870, and provided for the purpose of clarity in this policy.

Child-connected work	Work performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present, as authorised by the Principal and/or PARED Vic Board.
Child abuse	Child abuse includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) any act committed against a child involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) a sexual offence; or ii) a grooming offence (under section 49B(2) of the <i>Crimes Act 1958</i> (Vic)); and b) the infliction, on a child, of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) physical violence; or ii) serious emotional or psychological harm; and c) serious neglect of a child.
Child safety	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	Any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the Principal or PARED Vic Board for use by a child during or outside school hours, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

Commitment to child safety

The safety of children is a prerequisite to their learning – particularly when learning is viewed broadly as an education in life. In every single one of the College's policies and statements, child safety is a basic and necessary precondition. In order to achieve any of its objectives, the College must be – and is – firmly committed to the safety and wellbeing of every single child.

Strategies to ensure child safety

Harkaway Hills College embeds a great variety of tried and true mechanisms that safeguard and nourish the wellbeing of our students and school community. In a chain of affiliated schools worldwide, these mechanisms have demonstrated exemplary effectiveness in providing a wonderful environment for children and their families to grow. Each mechanism is described in more detail in **The spirit and key features of Harkaway Hills College: Student welfare and pastoral care policy**.



- Family spirit. The atmosphere of deep confidence and friendship that is fostered within the school community creates a web of support and brings out the best in each person. It provides the optimal environment for the spread of good example and inspiration. The emphasis the school places on the development of every person (parents and staff members included) creates space for well-intended suggestions for improving behaviours that may be potentially damaging.
- Character development and human virtues. The human virtues program is a constant reminder of all the good qualities each person needs to develop in order to live a fulfilling life. Special emphasis is constantly placed on service to others and all other virtues are seen in that context. The weekly change in the motto and the termly change of virtue means that new ideas and inspiration are constantly flowing through the College community, and the need to grow and to serve will never be forgotten or sidelined.

The human virtues program also creates the space and the language for children to express to their classroom or specialist teachers, as well as to their family and friends, any concerns they have with the way they are treated in any environment.

- The mentoring system. The growth and wellbeing of each child is closely followed by his/her mentor. When meeting one on one with each child fortnightly, there is every possibility that any danger the child is facing will be uncovered. There are regular and scheduled opportunities for the mentor to pursue any concerns he/she has about the child with the classroom teacher, the Principal and the parents – and clearly defined channels to approach other professionals as necessary. The code of conduct for mentors themselves is very clear, and there are also clearly demarcated channels for parents to express any concerns about the mentor's conduct with the classroom teacher and/or the Principal, or less formally with the class parents.
- Key parent functions and parenting courses. The importance of a loving and supportive environment for children is constantly stressed at all key parents functions (attendance at which is compulsory for school parents), and different aspects of parenting to achieve this environment are explored in detail. These themes are further elaborated upon in optional parenting courses offered by Family Education Australia and promoted by the College.
- Class parents. For each year level, one set of parents is appointed to take special interest and special care of the other parents of the students in that cohort. A second set of parents is appointed to assist these class parents. Together, they are responsible for creating a warm family environment generally amongst the parent cohort, and for specifically following up any struggles or difficulties that particular families are experiencing (eg sickness in the family, a new baby etc).
- Spiritual support. The College chaplain is ready and willing to help parents and families to grow in their faith, and to grow in love of God and others. In particular, the chaplain ensures he is regularly available to administer the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which provides an invaluable opportunity for each person to examine him/herself and his/her actions, and to receive advice and forgiveness.
- Grievance policies. These policies and associated procedures provide a clear guide to parents, staff members and (older) students who become aware of circumstances involving the school that need to be investigated and corrected. Specific procedures are in place for handling disclosures of child



abuse and require such disclosures be reported promptly to the appropriate authorities. These policies clearly outline a chain of communication and responsibilities.

It is clearly apparent that the College has many and varied structures and mechanisms to support both adults and children in every dimension of their lives. These strategies are in the first instance preventative – insofar as abusive actions are the result of intense stress or a poor character formation in any person, the possibility of such action eventuating is ameliorated by the constant effort made to support every person in the school community. The strategies also work to instill in children an understanding of their great value as human beings, and how they can expect others to treat them. Further, these strategies are also reactive, providing a language to use and a space wherein children can confide any circumstances or relationships in their lives that are hurtful.

Roles and Responsibilities

The **Board** of Harkaway Hills College:

- 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:

- 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.



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.

Training

The Board of Harkaway Hills College will ensure that appropriate guidance and training is provided to the individual members of the Board and to school staff about individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse, child abuse risks in the school environment and the school's current child protection strategies, policies and procedures. This training will be arranged annually.

Risk management

On an ongoing basis, the Principal will formally conduct risk assessments for child safety in all school environments. This will allow the College to assess and review the effectiveness of the mechanisms described above. Specific risk management strategies will be developed and implemented in response to the risks identified. The Principal will report on the risk assessments and strategies to the School Board.

Recruitment of school staff and enrolment of families

The staff members employed at the College are obviously critical to the operation of the school in accordance with its philosophy and, in partnership with the families enrolled, the implementation of all of the mechanisms described above. Both recruitment of new staff and enrolment of new families is a process carefully undertaken.

Therefore, the College has both a **recruitment policy** and an **enrolment policy**, as well as clear job descriptions for each category of employee, which reflect the qualities necessary in our staff, parents and children to ensure that the school is successful in its educational mission.

Last reviewed: 9 July 2020
To be reviewed: January 2021