Child Safe Policy

Scope

In accordance with the ethos of Oxley Christian College ("the College"), and to comply with Ministerial Order 870, this policy is to be adhered to by all members of the College community, including:

- the Governing Board of Elders and Directors of Life Ministry Centre Ltd;
- the College Council;
- the senior leadership team of the College;
- teachers and all other staff members;
- volunteers;
- students;
- contractors; and
- other visitors to the College.

Rationale

The ethos of the College, (among other things), is founded on the love of God towards all people, with emphasis on the children who are students at the College. In the promotion of God's love and the knowledge of God and Biblical principles, and to ensure the health, safety and overall wellbeing of all students, the College and its community will seek to comply with the Child Safe Standards, introduced by Ministerial Order 870 made by the Victorian Minister for Education on 22 December 2015.

Our commitment to child safety

The College is committed to child safety.

We want children to be safe, happy and supported. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.

We are committed to the safety, participation and advancement of all children.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.

We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

The College is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

The College has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.

The College is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

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 a culturally and / or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Our children

This policy is intended to support children to be vital and active participants in the College. As appropriate, we may involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We support diversity and understanding in the College, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- support the cultural safety, participation and advancement of Aboriginal children;
- support the cultural safety, participation and advancement of children from culturally and / or linguistically diverse backgrounds; and
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Our staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in the 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. As appropriate, staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in the College understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

The College culture aims for all staff and volunteers (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 and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers 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 and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand the 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. (Please refer to this organisation's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further.) 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.

Recruitment

We take 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. The College understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We readily accept applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and / or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check.

We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

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, 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 (when appropriate) actions we as an organisation take.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect 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

The College takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including the following.

- **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.
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in the College 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.
- **Grooming**: The law (section 49C of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)) prohibits communications with a child, or a child's parents / carers, with the intent of committing child sexual abuse. Staff, volunteers, and other adults associated with the College must be aware that grooming is an offence and report suspicions.
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

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 the College on social media).

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. As appropriate, we will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible, we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and / or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Professional Learning

This policy will be revisited with staff annually, as part of the Professional Learning program of the College.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

The College takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. 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.

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;
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it; or
- observing suspicious behaviour.

Support and assistance for children who disclose or are linked to child abuse

If a child discloses an actual or suspected incident of child abuse, the staff member, volunteer, or other adult associated with the College, to whom the incident has been disclosed, will be required to provide support and assistance to the child in accordance with the College Allegation of Child Abuse Guideline. In particular, the staff member, volunteer, or other adult associated with the College will be required to give consideration to the section in the Guideline titled ‘If a child discloses an incident of abuse to you’, which comprises the following actions.

- Try to separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully.
- Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred.
- Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Reassure the child that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- Do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident.

- Explain to them that this information will be kept private from other students and from staff, except it may need to be shared with a few particular people, such as with their parent / carer, specific College leaders, the Child Safety Officer, Child Protection, or the police.
- Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together, if you think the child is able to do this.
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to the College Child Safety Officer, police or child protection.
- Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.