



Cranbourne East Secondary College

Child Safety Policy and Commitment to Child Safety

Rationale

Victoria has introduced compulsory minimum standards that will apply to organisations that provide services for children to help protect children from all forms of abuse. The child safe standards form part of the Victorian Government's response to the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry.

1.2 Ministerial Order No. 870 sets out specific actions that registered schools need to take to meet the Child Safe Standards.

1.3 The child safe environments policy sets out the school's approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe; and provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

1.4 This policy will apply to all staff, volunteers, visitors and contractors, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people.

1.5 This policy will apply across a range of school environments (e.g. camps, online) and outside of school hours.

Our commitment to child safety

Cranbourne East Secondary College (CESC) is committed to child safety.

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.

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. We follow these rigorously.

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

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

CESC 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 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 there is a belief a child is at immediate risk of abuse the College procedures would be followed. A Principal Class member and then the Student Support Leader would be notified immediately.

Our children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our school. We 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 promote diversity and tolerance in our school and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. We promote this through our Wellbeing and Inclusion Policy. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- 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 our school.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by CESC code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All 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 our school understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our school 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 Professional Development 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 as part of the induction process receive Professional Development to ensure they understand our schools commitment to child safety. 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 CESC code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the DET Emergency Management, 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 appropriately qualified and/or experienced 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. CESC understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

The Department values diversity and is committed to workforce diversity and equal opportunity in schools and all education workplaces. The Department recognises that the provision of family friendly, supportive, safe and harassment free workplaces is essential to high performance and promotes flexible work, diversity and safety across all schools and Department workplaces.

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

We carry out reference checks 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 CESC 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, where appropriate on progress and any actions we as a school take.

Legislative responsibilities

CESC takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **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 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.
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.
- Our Mandatory Reporting Guidelines and Procedures

Risk management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). 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.

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

CESC 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 (see information about failure to disclose above).

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
- observing suspicious behaviour.

Evaluation:

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three year policy evaluation process.

Initially, this policy will be reviewed within the first year of its implementation to ensure that it complies with the requirements of Ministerial Order no 870.

Glossary of terms:

References:

Definitions: A full list of definitions for Ministerial Order No. 870

www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes

Ministerial Order No 870

<http://www.gazette.vic.gov.au/gazette/Gazettes2016/GG2016S002.pdf>

Child Safe Standards - DET

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/health/Pages/childsafes.aspx>

Child Safe Standards – DHHS

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards>