



CHILD SAFETY POLICY 2019-2021

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.

- Ministerial Order No. 870 sets out specific actions that registered schools need to take to meet the Child Safe Standards.
- This Child Safe 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.
- This policy will apply to all staff, volunteers, visitors and contractors, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people.
- 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 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. Cranbourne East Secondary College has zero tolerance for child abuse and is committed to providing a child-safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and 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, LGBTI children, as well as the safety of children with a disability. Every person involved in Cranbourne East Secondary 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 is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

Decision-making and operations at Cranbourne East Secondary College will:

- Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety
- Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives
- Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children
- Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount
- Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children
- Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development

- 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
- Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities
- Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk
- Value the input of, and communicate regularly with, families and carers.

Our children

This policy is intended to empower children to become more 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, religions and cultural backgrounds are welcome. We promote this through our Wellbeing and Inclusion Policy.

Our staff, volunteers and visitors

This policy guides our staff, volunteers and visitors on how to behave with children in our school. All of our staff, volunteers and visitors must agree to abide by CESC code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. New staff, visitors and contractors will be provided with a copy of the code of conduct and briefed on the College's policies and processes in relation to child safety.

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, volunteers and visitors (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 to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

Professional Development is provided to staff to assist them in ensuring the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, LGBTI children, as well as 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 school's 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 regarding appropriate behaviour). Any inappropriate behaviour must be reported through appropriate channels, including the CESC Child Safety Officer, a member of Principal team, DET Emergency Management, Department of Health and Human Services and/or 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 our students. 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, volunteers and visitors, we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

DET 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 their VIT and WWC Check.

We carry out reference checks to ensure that we are recruiting staff that meet our child safety obligations.

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 the 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 the school takes.

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.

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.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

CESC takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate these thoroughly and quickly. The Principal team will work with the Child Safety Officer and other staff as required to ensure concerns are dealt with according to DET guidelines. We work to ensure all children, families, staff, volunteers and visitors know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or inappropriate behaviour or are a victim. 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 a reasonable belief may include:

- 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.

References:

www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes

Ministerial Order No 870

Child Safe Standards - DET

Child Safe Standards – DHHS

- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Child Safety Mandatory Reporting Policy
- External Providers Visitors Policy
- Inclusion & Diversity Policy
- Statement of Commitment to Child Safety
- Statement of Values & Philosophy Policy
- Supervision & Duty of Care Policy
- Volunteers/ Visitors Policy
- Yard Duty & Supervision Policy