

CHILD SAFE POLICY

PURPOSE:

The child safe policy sets out Bendigo South East College'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.

SCOPE:

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

The policy applies across a range of school forums including camps, excursions and online and outside of school hours.

The college will advise partner organisations about this policy and the school's underlying philosophy towards the care of children.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT & PRINCIPLES:

Bendigo South 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.

Bendigo South East Secondary College has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Bendigo South East Secondary College 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 and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, LGBTI students, those with diverse religious beliefs as well as the safety of children with a disability and vulnerable children.

Every person involved in Bendigo South East Secondary College has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role each of us plays, individually and collectively, to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all we do and every decision we make.

Bendigo South East Secondary College's principles for child safety. ¹

In our planning, decision-making and operations Bendigo South East College will:

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

7. 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;
8. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
9. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
10. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
11. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
12. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
13. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
14. 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;
15. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
16. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
17. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.
18. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
19. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
20. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
21. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
22. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
23. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
24. 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;
25. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
26. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
27. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

¹ Adapted from Our Community (2016) *Child Protection Toolkit: What every not-for-profit organisation must do now*.

POLICY & PROCEDURES

Policies and procedures outlining school's approach to the Child Safe Standards are outlined on our college website: <http://bse.vic.edu.au/>

For more information contact the college Principal or Student Support Centre Facilitator.

A CHILD SAFE CULTURE

Bendigo South East Secondary College's culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinize concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

The College's plan for creating a child safe culture can be found on the college website <http://bse.vic.edu.au/> and is reflected in relevant college policies: Code of Conduct & Mandatory Reporting.

PERSONNEL UNDERSTAND THEIR ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES/CODE OF CONDUCT

Bendigo South East Secondary College leaders and managers will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's Code of Conduct and Mandatory Reporting Policies.

The school's Code of Conduct sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. The Code of Conduct can be found on the college website: <http://bse.vic.edu.au/> and is reflected in relevant college policies.

HUMAN RESOURCES PRACTICES & TRAINING

The college applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children.

We will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect.

All staff are required to complete the Mandatory Reporting training annually and undergo National Criminal History Records check and maintain a valid Working with Children Check.

REPORTING A CHILD SAFETY CONCERN OR COMPLAINT

The college has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. Immediate action should include reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection or another appropriate agency and notifying the principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns.

The school will take action to respond to a complaint.

The College's policy and procedures for reporting a child safety concern or complaint can be found on the BSE website and is reflected in relevant college policies.

RISK REDUCTION & MANAGEMENT

The college believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes.

The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.

The College's approach to Child Safety risk reduction and management can be found on the BSE website and is reflected in relevant college policies.

LISTENING TO CHILDREN

The college has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/carers. We encourage child and parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/carers to understand their rights and their responsibilities.

When the college is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct with, or abuse of, a child the school will listen to the complainant's account of things and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (or their parents/carers) informed about progress.

CONFIDENTIALITY & PRIVACY:

This college collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law. The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the School Privacy Policy.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/governance/pages/privacy.aspx>

DEFINITIONS:

Child abuse includes:

any act committed against a child involving:

- a sexual offence or
- an offence under section 49B(2) of the **Crimes Act 1958** (grooming)

the infliction, on a child, of:

- physical violence or
- serious emotional or psychological harm
- serious neglect of a child.

Child-connected work means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child safety encompasses 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.

Proprietor in relation to a government school, means the Secretary of the Department of Education and Training.

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school
- online school environments (including email, social media and intranet systems)
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

School governing authority means, in the case of a government school:

- the Secretary; or

- a school council, as authorised by or under the **Education and Training Reform Act 2006**;
- the principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school or under the **Education and Training Reform Act 2006**.

School staff being an individual working in a school environment who is:

- directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority;
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary), and including a chaplain or minister of religion.
- The school leader for child safety should have sufficient status and authority, including leadership support and the ability to direct other staff (where appropriate) to undertake the role effectively.

RELATED POLICIES & DOCUMENTS

DET Health & Wellbeing -

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/health/Pages/default.aspx>

DET Child Safe PROTECT-

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/childprotection.aspx>

REVIEW CYCLE AND EVALUATION:

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school community

This policy was last updated on 21.11.19 and is scheduled for review in November 2020.