



CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY

Date	October 2023	Review Cycle	2 Years	Approved By	Principal
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INTERPRETER SERVICE

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact our college on 9741 1822 or werribee.sc@education.vic.gov.au so interpreters may be arranged via VITS or local services.



PURPOSE

The Werribee Secondary College Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our school’s commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of our school’s approach to implementing [Ministerial Order 1359](#) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

It informs our school community of everyone’s obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

Scope:

This policy:

- applies to all school staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to school council members where indicated.
- applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided by for a student’s use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers
- should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related school policies section below.

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COLLEGE MISSION AND VALUES

At Werribee Secondary College we strive for success in all the chosen endeavours of our students. We nurture the values of **respect** and **responsibility**.

We **respect**, and are **responsible** for embracing our identity and that of others; taking care of our local and global communities, and valuing the right to learn.

We respect and are responsible for our:

Learning

I respect my own right to learn and that of others, and I recognise my responsibility to become a lifelong learner.

Identity

I respect the diverse cultures, religions, languages, beliefs, genders, sexual orientation and the specific needs of those around me. I respect my own role within this community and take responsibility to show respect for both myself and others.

Community

I respect the local and global communities within which I live. I understand my responsibility in protecting these communities to ensure a safe and sustainable future in which everyone feels they belong.

DEFINITIONS

The following terms in this policy have [specific definitions](#):

- child
- child safety
- child abuse
- child-connected work
- child-related work
- school environment
- school boarding environment
- school staff
- school boarding premises
- staff
- school governing authority
- school boarding premises
- governing authority
- student
- volunteer

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

- Werribee Secondary College is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families.
- We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect

their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

- We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments.
- We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.
- We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our school environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.
- Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.
- Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our school has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.
- We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

School leadership team

Our school leadership team (comprising the Principal, Assistant Principals and Improvement Leadership Team) is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

Principal's and Assistant Principal's will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed.
- model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing.
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered .
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students
- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the school community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings.
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of responding to abuse.
- create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

School staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school or the Department of Education and Training, and always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures.
- act in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct.

- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#).
- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

School council members, in performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, will:

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council
- undertake annual training on child safety, school councils can use the Child Safe Standards School Council Training slide presentation available on [PROTECT](#).
- approve updates to, and act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members
- when hiring school council employees, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe.
- Specific staff child safety responsibilities

Werribee Secondary College has nominated the Director of Student Wellbeing & Inclusion to support the Principal to implement our child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training.

- The Principal and Director of Wellbeing & Inclusion are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.
- The Director of Wellbeing & Inclusion is responsible for monitoring and informing of the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- Anyone in our school community should approach the Director of Wellbeing & Inclusion or Principal if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

Our school has both a **Student Wellbeing and Student Management Team** who discuss and respond to issues of child safety. These teams meet regularly to identify any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing. Student input is encouraged. Our college also monitors the Child Safety Risk Register.

CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments. We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school. The Child Safety Code of Conduct also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

MANAGING RISKS TO CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING

At our school we identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site overnight camps, adventure activities and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our school leadership team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the

actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

Our college promotes and manages risks in physical and online environments in line with [PROTECT](#).

ESTABLISHING A CULTURALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT

At Werribee Secondary College, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

We consider how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

We implement the [PROTECT Child Safety Standards](#) and strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community.

STUDENT EMPOWERMENT

To support child safety and wellbeing at Werribee Secondary College we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced, and we encourage strong friendships and support in the school to ensure a sense of belonging through our homegroup system.

Through homegroup, we inform students of their right to safety and our school values of respect and responsibility. We give them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers. We ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time.

Students and families can also access information on how to report concerns by speaking to the Werribee Secondary College office or emailing us at werribee.sc@education.vic.gov.au. Families can also contact members of staff, including their Year Level Coordinator, Wellbeing staff or the Principal, via Compass.

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

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Werribee Secondary College families and the school community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child

safety and wellbeing. We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

We do this by:

- Working closely with school council on the development and approval of policies.
- Reporting any child safety concerns through school council as a standing meeting item.
- Encouraging regular two-way communication with our school community through actions such as surveys, newsletters, information nights, interviews, volunteer opportunities and other activities.
- Making all of our child safety policies and procedures available for students and parents on our college website (werribeesc.vic.edu.au) or from the front office.
- Other actions as noted in the information contained at [PROTECT Child Safe Standard 4](#)

DIVERSITY AND EQUITY

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all. We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal children and young people
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and young people with disabilities
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- international students
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Our Student Wellbeing Policy and Bullying Prevention and Response Policy provide more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

Some of our strategies to uphold equity and respect diverse needs include:

- Supporting staff and volunteers to understand the diverse circumstance of children and students, and provide support and respond to vulnerable children and students.
- Making sure children, students, staff, volunteers, and the school community have access to information, support and processes that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.
- Paying particular attention to the needs of students with disability, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students who are unable to live at home, international students, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) students.
- Providing a culturally safe and understanding environment for Aboriginal students.
- Engaging local community supports to assist the college in supporting refugee or migrant families.
- Ensuring actions outlined in our policies are implemented through communication and training.

SUITABLE STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

At Werribee Secondary College, we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

Staff recruitment

When recruiting staff, our college follows the Department of Education and Training's recruitment policies and guidelines, available on the Policy and Advisory Library (PAL):

- [Recruitment in Schools](#)
- [Suitability for Employment Checks](#)
- [School Council Employment](#)
- [Contractor OHS Management](#)

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching registration
- collect and record:
 - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
 - the person's history of working with children
 - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.
 - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

Staff induction

- All new staff at the college are provided a copy of the Werribee Secondary College Staff handbook
- An initial induction session is conducted each year which covers policy and practices, with additional supporting staff and mentors in place to assist further throughout the year.

All newly appointed staff will also be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program will include a focus on:

- the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (*this document*)
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures and
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

ONGOING SUPERVISION AND MANAGEMENT OF STAFF

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. Staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. This will be done by the PDP (Professional Development Process).

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our school and department policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

We implement recruitment practices for staff and contractors engaged in child connected work, that ensure:

- all job advertisements have a statement setting out the job's requirements, duties, responsibilities and essential or relevant qualifications, experience, and attributes in relation to child safety and wellbeing.
- all applicants for jobs are informed about the child safety practices, including the Code of Conduct
- we sight, verify and record Working with Children clearances where required under the Worker Screening Act 2020 or any equivalent background check, for example VIT registration.
- where the person will be engaged in child-related work, we collect and record proof of identify, essential or relevant qualifications, history of work involving children and references addressing suitability for the job and working with children

We implement engagement practices for volunteers engaged in child connected work, including:

- sighting, verifying, and recording Working with Children clearances where required under the Worker Screening Act 2020 or any equivalent background check.
- considering the child safety risks relevant to the volunteer's role and, if reasonable and appropriate, collect and record proof of identify, essential or relevant qualifications, history of work involving children and references addressing suitability for the job and working with children.
- making volunteers aware of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct.
- Ensuring all newly appointed school staff, school council members, and volunteers engaged in child-connected work receive an induction regarding child safety and wellbeing appropriate to their roles, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and procedures for managing child abuse complaints and concerns.
- Ensuring school staff, school council members and volunteers engaged in child-connected work are aware of their responsibilities to children and students, information sharing, reporting obligations and record-keeping obligations.
- The school council ensuring that Department of Education and Training recruitment policies and practices are followed and appropriate records kept in respect of school council employees
- Reviewing practices for the ongoing supervision and people management of staff and volunteers to ensure child safety and wellbeing are a focus.

SUITABILITY OF VOLUNTEERS

All volunteers are required to comply with our [Volunteers Policy](#) which describes how we assess the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing induction and training, and supervision and management. All volunteers must sign in/out at the college and wear the provided visitor lanyard as identification.

CHILD SAFETY KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND AWARENESS

Each year, the staff of Werribee Secondary College are reminded of and sign indicating their understanding and obligations of the Child safe code of conduct. Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our staff participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- our school's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices
- Annually completing the [Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#) online module.
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
- responding effectively to issues of child safety/wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment.

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing, for example, training for our volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

SCHOOL COUNCIL TRAINING AND EDUCATION

To ensure our school council is equipped with the knowledge required to make decisions in the best interests of student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment, the council is offered training at least annually. Training includes guidance on:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse
- child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment
- Werribee Secondary College's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices.

The Director of Student Wellbeing & Inclusion is also available to consult with and provide guidance to school councilors as required.

COMPLAINTS AND REPORTING PROCESSES

Werribee Secondary College fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden. We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our school's Complaint Policy. The Complaints Policy can be found alongside all of our college policies located at werribeesc.vic.edu.au.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including school council employees and homestay providers) must follow our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures. Our policy and procedures address all complaints and concerns of child abuse in any way connected to the school. As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, we will ensure our school follows:

- the [Four Critical Actions](#) for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child
- the [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending

Our Student Wellbeing Policy and Bullying Prevention Policy cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

COMMUNICATIONS

Werribee Secondary College is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on our website including the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document), Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure.
- displaying PROTECT or other relevant posters around the school.
- updates in our school newsletter, Compass parent portal or other general communications.
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at leadership, staff and school council meetings.
- Including information in handbooks, inductions and training sessions.

PRIVACY AND INFORMATION SHARING

Werribee Secondary College collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws. For information on how our school collects, uses and discloses information refer to: [Schools' Privacy Policy](#).

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the Department of Education and Training's policy: [Records Management – School Records](#)

REVIEW OF CHILD SAFETY PRACTICES

At Werribee Secondary College, we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices. We will:

- review and improve our policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident.
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice.
- act with transparency, share learnings and review outcomes with staff and our school community.
- keep staff and school council updated of changes, requirements and/or training opportunities.

RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related school policies, procedures, and codes all of which **can be found on the college website at werribeesc.vic.edu.au** or by contacting the front office of the college.

Related Department of Education and Training policies:

- [Bullying Prevention and Response Policy](#)
- [Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes](#)
- [Complaints Policy](#)
- [Contractor OHS Management Policy](#)
- [Digital Learning in Schools Policy](#)
- [Family Violence Support](#)
- [Protecting Children: Reporting Obligations Policy](#)
- [Policy and Guidelines for Recruitment in Schools](#)
- [Reportable Conduct Policy](#)
- [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#)
- [Supervision of Students Policy](#)
- [Visitors in Schools Policy](#)
- [Volunteers in Schools Policy](#)
- [Working with Children and other Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors](#)

Other related documents:

- [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- [Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools](#)

POLICY REVIEW

The Student Management Team is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at least every two years for approval by the Principal. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school community including school council.