



Presbyterian Ladies' College

MELBOURNE

PLC Child Safety Policy

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

PLC values and respects each and every student and is committed to providing them with an outstanding education in a safe and welcoming environment.

At PLC we have a zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The College regards its child protection responsibilities as being of the utmost importance and so is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture. PLC is committed to supporting and upholding the Victorian Government's Child Safety Standards complying with Ministerial Order 870.

Child abuse includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect and a child's exposure to family violence. PLC is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse and demonstrates this commitment through the implementation of a comprehensive Child Safety Program designed to keep children safe.

This policy consolidates a number of policies that have been developed and implemented by PLC to provide a safe environment and protect the emotional, psychological and physical wellbeing of its students. PLC acknowledges that it has a legal and moral duty to protect its students from foreseeable harm. This includes the provision of safeguards against mistreatment and prompt reporting of child abuse. (The definition of 'child' is any student enrolled at a school. This includes overseas students and boarders, for whom the College has additional duty of care responsibilities.)

Preventative measures include careful screening and selection of staff, staff training, and the implementation of the Child Safety Staff Code of Conduct. This will ensure a high level of professional standards.

Child Safety Principles

PLC's commitment to child safety is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse:

- All children have the right to be safe
- The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount
- The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected
- Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Safety Staff Code of Conduct
- The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture
- Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our College community
- Procedures are in place to screen all staff, volunteers, contractors and external education providers who have direct contact with children
- Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility
- Child protection training is mandatory for all PLC Council members, staff, contractors and volunteers

- Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the College community
- Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

Risk Management

PLC has implemented a number of risk management policies and procedures to

- provide a safe learning environment for its students
- identify risks of child abuse and mitigate those risks
- assist staff to detect child abuse
- care for a student who may be a victim of abuse
- report suspected or known child abuse to appropriate authorities

Additionally, PLC is committed to monitoring its practices and procedures to ensure the highest standard of care for its students, and will seek to continually improve its practices and procedures.

PLC Child Safety Staff Code of Conduct

PLC has a Child Safety Staff Code of Conduct which outlines expectations of professional conduct, and standards to which all staff must adhere. The overarching principle guiding all adult behaviours is that the safety of all students is paramount.

- All staff are required to sign a statement acknowledging that the Code of Conduct and this Policy have been read, understood, and that they will agree to abide by them.

Staff recruitment

PLC conducts a rigorous screening and recruitment process that includes exacting reference checks. All applicants for employment at PLC are informed of the College's child safety policies and procedures. The successful applicant must complete an induction prior to working at the College, and must also sign an agreement indicating that they have read and will abide by the PLC Child Safety Policy and the PLC Child Safety Staff Code of Conduct.

In addition:

- All teachers must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching
- All non-teaching staff must have a current Working With Children Check

Staff Induction and Training

All PLC staff must attend training on child safety and protection and PLC is committed to providing ongoing training to its staff.

New staff will also undergo induction that includes comprehensive details of duty of care, child protection, and the statutory obligations that all staff must be aware of regarding reporting child abuse. All staff will be required to sign a statement that they have read, understood and will abide by the PLC Child Safety Policy and PLC Child Safety Staff Code of Conduct and all obligations related to child safety.

Visitors to PLC

During school hours all visitors must be clearly identified by signing in at the relevant reception areas of the College and wearing a visitor's lanyard at all times whilst on the campus. This includes parents/guardians of Junior School and ELC students when volunteering assistance at specialist lessons e.g. swimming. Junior school and ELC parents/guardians who are dropping off or picking up children at the start and end of day are not required to sign in or wear a lanyard. Parents/guardians accompanying their children to the Aquatic Centre for general admission lessons are not required to wear a lanyard.

Staff are required to be vigilant about visitors (including parents / guardians) to the College and speak with anyone who is not wearing a lanyard to clarify the purpose of their visit.

Roles and Responsibilities

At PLC all members of the PLC Council, the Principal, Child Safety Officers and staff, as well as volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. All staff, volunteers and contractors at PLC are required to actively support the Child Safety Policy and be an integral part of ensuring a culture of child safety.

The Principal, Deputy Principal (Students), Deputy Principal (Administration), Head and Deputy Head of Junior School, Head of ELC and Heads of Boarding oversee the implementation of child safety policies and practices.

Reporting Child Abuse or Child Safety Concerns

The College has developed and implemented the following procedures for reporting and responding to allegations of child abuse.

Child Safety Officers

PLC has appointed a number of staff as Child Safety Officers, whose main role is to be staff who students, parents and staff can turn to with child abuse or child safety concerns. The Child Safety Officers will also ensure the safety and wellbeing of any child who makes or is affected by an allegation of child abuse. They will also help ensure College compliance, best practice and PLC's ongoing commitment to improvement in child safety procedures.

The Child Safety Officers at PLC are:

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| Early Learning Centre | Mrs Deborah Hendren (Head of ELC) |
| Junior School | Mrs Cheryl Penberthy (Head of Junior School) |
| | Mr John Law (Deputy Head of Junior School) |
| Senior School | Mrs Anne-Marie Williams (Deputy Principal - Students) |
| | Ms Kim Watkins (Student Wellbeing Coordinator) |
| | Dr Shauna McGreevy (Head of Counselling) |
| Boarding House | Mrs Rachel Manderson (Head of Boarding) |
| Sport | Mrs Sally Pontifex (Director of Sport) |
| Aquatic Centre | Mrs Shelly Hawkins (Aquatic Centre Manager) |
| Non-Teaching Staff | Mr Hamish Blair (Business Manager) |

Reporting Procedures

The College has implemented the following procedures as outlined in the flow charts; 'Responding to Sexual Offending' (page 7) and Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse' (page 8).

- Staff are trained to report concerns regarding student safety to a Child Safety Officer. (If a particular Child Safety Officer is not available, all Child Safety Officers are trained to respond.)
- All teaching staff are trained in their legal obligation to report child abuse (sexual, physical, emotional or psychological), and their responsibility in keeping children and young people safe
- All students will be informed in an age appropriate way of PLC's Child Safety policies and how students will be supported and assisted if they disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse
- All suspected or known cases of abuse will be reported to Child Protection at the Department of Human Services or the Police (see end of this document for definition of 'abuse') Further detail should be referenced from the PLC Mandatory Reporting Policy and/or the Minimising the Risk of Sexual Offences Policy.
- Should an allegation of suspected abuse be made, PLC is committed to protecting the child and will:
 - listen sensitively to the student
 - protect the student and keep them safe
 - inform appropriate authorities
 - monitor the ongoing wellbeing of the student
 - record, make secure and retain all documentation using the appropriate template; '[Responding to Suspected Child Abuse](#)' or '[Responding to Suspected Student Sexual Offending](#)' (see URLs below)
 - http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/PROTECT_Responding_TemplateSchools.pdf
 - http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/PROTECT_Responding_TemplateSchools.pdf

Fulfilling the roles and responsibilities contained in the procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse.

Action in response to Victoria's reportable conduct scheme

The Principal will be informed of any allegation of child abuse or misconduct towards children against a worker or volunteer.

Upon receiving the allegation the Principal will:

- Take immediate action to protect children from further potential for abuse
- Report the allegation to the CCYP. In circumstances where an allegation of criminal conduct is made, the Victorian Police will be informed as the first priority
- Ensure investigation of the allegation occurs, that appropriate action is taken in response and records of the outcome are kept
- Report the finding and reasons for the outcome to the CCYP at the conclusion of the investigation.

Student Empowerment

PLC has policies, procedures and pastoral and educational programs in place to empower students through building:

- a clear understanding of appropriate and acceptable behaviours
- a strong sense of self
- resilience
- ethical behaviours
- leadership qualities and capabilities
- healthy relationships (including sexuality)

PLC's pastoral program will include age appropriate education and information sessions for students to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters.

Bullying

PLC has a zero tolerance of bullying or harassment of any kind. The College acknowledges that bullying does occur in schools at times and has policies and educational programs to mitigate against this kind of behaviour. There are clear guidelines for students on how to respond to an incident of bullying, including bringing it to a trusted adult's attention as quickly as possible.

Online Safety

PLC acknowledges that students routinely access the Internet and therefore has in place policies, guidelines and educational programs to support and encourage cyber-safe behaviours.

Policy and Program Review

PLC is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Safety Program. The Program is regularly reviewed for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child protection related laws, regulations and standards.

Key definitions

'Child' means any student enrolled at a school.

(Ministerial Order 870)

'Child abuse' includes

1. Any act committed against a child involving

- sexual offence
- grooming of a child (grooming a child for sexual purposes under the age of 16 years)

2. Infliction on a child of

- physical violence
- serious emotional or psychological harm

3. Serious neglect of a child

(From Section 1.1.3(1) of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006)

All adults in Victoria (18 years and over), including parents / guardians, have an obligation to inform the Police if they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence or grooming offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16 (From Crimes Act Vic 1958)

'School staff' in a non-government school means 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
- a minister of religion

'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 and intranet systems)
- other locations provided by the school for the child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events)

Dawn Clements
Principal

Reviewed and updated 2 February 2018

The Principal, Deputy Principal (Students), Deputy Principal (Administration), Head and Deputy Head of Junior School and Head of ELC oversee the development, implementation and review of child safety policies and practices.

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR PRESBYTERIAN LADIES' COLLEGE

Responding to Sexual Offending

Actions for PLC staff, parents and school community members

The College Principal, Teachers, and the College Nurse are mandated to report suspected or known physical or sexual abuse (CFYA 2005). All staff, parents and school community members are legally required to report sexual abuse for children under the age of 16 (Crimes Act, 1958: Failure to disclose, 2014, and Failure to protect, 2015). The Ministerial Order 870, Child Safe Standards, requires everyone in the school community to uphold the Standards and report allegations of suspected child abuse.

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

1. You must act, by following these 4 critical actions, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a suspicion that a student is a victim of sexual offending and/or has engaged in sexual offending.
2. You **must** act even if you are unsure and have not directly observed any offending (e.g. if a victim, or another person, tells you about the offence).
3. You must keep/assist to develop clear and comprehensive notes. Use the template *'Responding to Student Sexual Offending'*

| 1 RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY | 2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES | 3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS | 4 PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT |
|---|--|---|---|
| <p>If there is no risk of immediate harm go to Action 2</p> <p>If a child is at immediate risk of harm you must ensure their safety by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • separating alleged victims and others involved • administering first aid • calling 000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance to respond to immediate health or safety concerns • working with College staff to identify a contact person at the school for future liaison with Police. This would be a senior staff member such as the Deputy Principal, Head of Junior School or the Principal. | <p>As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you must report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of sexual offending as soon as possible. Failure to report sexual offending is a criminal offence. You may refer to three relevant PLC policies for more information: Mandatory Reporting, Minimising Sexual Abuse and/or Child Safety Policy.</p> <p>College notifications will generally be made by the Head of Counselling, the Deputy Principal (Students) or the Head of Junior School, however, every individual member of the community may have the responsibility to follow these steps.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Call VICTORIA POLICE on 000 in all instances. 2. Call DHHS CHILD PROTECTION if you believe that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the victim's parent/carers are unable or unwilling to protect the child • the student who is alleged to have engaged in student sexual offending is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ aged over 10 and under 15 and may be in need of therapeutic treatment to address those behaviours ○ may be displaying physical and behavioural indicators of being the victim of child abuse 3. You must also report to the SCHOOL PRINCIPAL or delegate. | <p>The College Principal or delegate will consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers.</p> <p>They may advise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not to contact the parents/carers (e.g. in circumstances where contacting the parents/carers is likely to adversely effect a Victoria Police investigation or where the student is a mature minor and has requested their parent/ carer not be notified) • to contact the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion). | <p>PLC will provide support for students who are a victim of a sexual offence and to students who may have engaged in a sexual offence (as this is part of our duty of care). The Head of Counselling will work with the College Principal or delegate to develop a Student Support Plan. Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals.</p> |
| <p>Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.</p> | <p>You and the Principal or delegate must retain written records of all discussions relating to the incident and/or allegations made as close in time to the actual event, using the template described above. These records should be in hard copy and placed in a separate file. The file should be labelled 'confidential' and held in a secure place with limited access to anyone other than the Principal or delegate.</p> | | <p>CONTACT</p> <p>DHHS Child Protection East Division 1300 360 391 After hours, weekends, public holidays 13 12 78 Child First www.dhs.vic.gov.au Victoria Police 000 or your local police station Victorian Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Unit Contact Box Hill 8892 3292 Student Incident and Recovery Service (03) 9637 2934 Independent Schools Victoria (03) 9825 7200</p> |

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR PRESBYTERIAN LADIES' COLLEGE

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

Actions for PLC staff, parents and school community members

The College Principal, Teachers, and the College Nurse are mandated to report suspected or known physical or sexual abuse (CFYA 2005). All staff, parents and school community members are legally required to report sexual abuse for children under the age of 16 (Crimes Act, 1958: Failure to disclose, 2014, and Failure to protect, 2015). The Ministerial Order 870, Child Safe Standards, requires everyone in the school community to uphold the Standards and report allegations of suspected child abuse.

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

1. You must act, by following these 4 critical actions, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.
2. You must act if you form a suspicion/ reasonable belief, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).
3. You must keep/assist to develop clear and comprehensive notes. Use the template '*Responding to Suspected Child Abuse*'

A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

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| <p>You and the Principal or delegate must retain written records of all discussions relating to the incident and/or allegations made as close in time to the actual event, using the template described above. These records should be in hard copy and placed in a separate file. The file should be labelled 'confidential' and held in a secure place with limited access to anyone other than the Principal or delegate.</p> | | | <p>CONTACT</p> <p>DHHS Child Protection East Division 1300 360 391 or After hours, weekends, public holidays 13 12 78 Child First www.dhs.vic.gov.au Victoria Police 000 or your local police station Victorian Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Unit Contact Box Hill 8892 3292 Student Incident and Recovery Service (03) 9637 2934 Independent Schools Victoria (03) 9825 7200</p> |

Reference: Four Critical Actions Child Abuse http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf developed by DET, CECV and ISV.