

## Rationale

Every Child has the right to a full and productive life, free from abuse. Casey Grammar School is committed to providing a child safe and child friendly environment by prioritising the welfare, safety and protection of all students from all forms of child abuse.

Child abuse includes any act committed against a child involving a sexual offense or grooming, infliction of physical violence or serious emotional or psychological harm on a child, or serious neglect of a child.

Casey Grammar School has a zero tolerance for child abuse and is committed to acting in the children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The school regards its child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture.

This policy forms the foundation of Casey Grammar School's procedures, practices, decision-making processes and ultimately the school's culture with respect to child safety.

Casey Grammar School will follow the guidelines of **Ministerial Order 870 Child Safe Standards** at all times.

## Aims

- To protect children from abuse by embedding a focus on child protection in the school's processes and human resource practices.
- To ensure that expectations for staff and volunteers around child safety are clear, and that all staff and volunteers are given appropriate training.
- To provide age-appropriate education for students throughout the school.
- To promote an open discussion of child protection issues within the school.
- To ensure the school's compliance with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection in Victoria.
- To consider and accommodate the diversity of all students, including, but not limited to:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children;
  - Children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
  - Children with disabilities; and
  - Children who are vulnerable.

## Scope

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

## Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Child Safety Principles

- All personnel of Casey Grammar School are responsible for supporting the safety of children by adherence to all child safe standards and obligations outlined by the Department of Education and Training (PROTECT), to ensure behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.
- Casey Grammar School should be a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/carers. The school is committed to supporting and encouraging students to use their voice to raise and share their concerns with a trusted adult at any time of need. The school will promote the Child Safe Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children, per the School Curriculum.

- By embedding a child safe culture, Casey Grammar School ensures that risks to Child Safety are identified early, and steps are taken to address and reduce such risks, both in the physical environment and online environments.
- Regular, ongoing training and education are important to ensure that everyone at Casey Grammar School understands stated policies and procedures, how to identify child abuse, and the steps to be taken where a child's safety is at risk.

## Implementation

### Legal Responsibilities

Casey Grammar School takes its 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 this information to the police.
- **Failure to protect:** People in 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.
- **Mandatory Reporting:** All staff who are mandatory reporters (teachers, the principal, nurses, registered medical practitioners, and members of the police force) must comply with their duties, as outlined in the school's **Mandatory Reporting Policy**.

### Strategies to embed a child safe culture

A child safe culture is important for the early identification of risks to child safety and the effective reduction of such risks. Casey Grammar School shall maintain a child safe culture across the school community through proactive leadership and strategies including, but not exclusive to:

- Providing age-appropriate child safety awareness programs and resources for students as part of the School Curriculum. These Wellbeing programs will educate students on unacceptable behaviour towards them and the importance of, and methods for, disclosing unsafe behaviour to appropriate staff.
- Parents will be made aware of this policy and Casey Grammar School's commitment to child safety through the school website.
- Annual Child Safety Training for all staff and the School Board.
- Prioritisation of the wellbeing and safety of all students in all decisions of the School Board, taking special consideration of children with perceived disadvantages such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable.
- Compliance with the school's **Child Safe Code of Conduct** and all child safe standards and obligations outlined by the Department of Education and Training (PROTECT) by all staff and volunteers, when interacting with children.
- Upholding a strict recruitment process for all new employees to ensure all new staff are appropriately qualified to work with children.

### Recruitment

- Casey Grammar School takes all reasonable steps to employ qualified people to work with children. All prospective employees are required to be interviewed, in addition to providing at least two nominated professional referees. Nominated referees will be asked child safety related questions as outlined on Casey Grammar School referee checklist template, including the applicant's attitudes and behaviours in previous child-related roles, and whether the applicant has ever had a child-related complaint made against them.

- Additionally, per the **Staff Employment Policy**, all teaching staff must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (“VIT”) and all staff engaged in child-related work, including volunteers and contracted personnel, are required to hold a current Working with Children Check (“WWCC”) and to provide evidence of this Check.

### **Training**

- On commencement of their employment, all staff will receive mandatory training relating to identifying child abuse, forming a belief that a child is at risk, and reporting obligations and procedures. To ensure all staff are up to date and familiar with their reporting obligations, this training will be run annually, with attendance required for all staff members. Training will include face-to-face professional learning and an online e-learning program. Any staff who miss the initial or annual training, or are unsure of their mandatory reporting obligations, are required to contact the Principal.
- The School Board will undergo annual Child Safety training, conducted by an experienced and knowledgeable training provider each February. This will be included in the agenda of the first Board meeting of each year.

### **Reporting a child safety concern or complaint**

- The school has clear expectations for all staff, sub-contractors and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. All staff must follow the school’s Complaints Resolution and Grievances Policy and the Mandatory Reporting Policy if there is an incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse. Sub-contractors and volunteers will be advised of the existence of the Failure to Disclose section of the Ministerial Order 870 and that Casey Grammar extends this responsibility to **all** students.
- As soon as a staff member, subcontractor or volunteer witnesses an incident, receives a disclosure or forms a reasonable belief that a child has or is at risk of being abused, the staff member, sub-contractor or volunteer must report the incident to the staff member in charge and the school must immediately follow the Four Critical Actions for Schools:
  1. Responding to Emergency
  2. Reporting to Authorities/ Referring to Services
  3. Contacting Parents/ Carers
  4. Provide ongoing support

For more information on the Four Critical Actions, please see link under Resources section of this policy.

- Immediate actions should include reporting concerns to the Department of Health and Human Services (“DHHS”) Child Protection, Victoria Police and/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.
- In the event that there is a life-threatening danger to a student, staff are required to contact Emergency Services on 000.
- It is expected that the Principal will be advised of a notification to DHHS, Victoria Police or VIT.
- A report may be the result of investigation of observations of risk indicators, private or public disclosure by a child, or third party disclosure.
- Casey Grammar School will never prohibit or discourage school staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse.
- The school will always take action to respond to a complaint in accordance with the school’s Complaints Resolution and Grievances Policy and Procedures.
- Support will be provided for any party as required following a disclosure.

### **Failure to Disclose – Failure to disclose, failure to protect and grooming offenses**

- Any staff member who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child must disclose that information to Police. Failure to disclose the information to the Police is a criminal offence. This applies to all adults in Victoria.
- Any staff member who becomes aware that an adult associated with the School poses a risk of sexual abuse to a student must take all reasonable steps to reduce or remove that risk. Failure to take reasonable steps to protect a student from the risk of sexual abuse from an adult associated with the school is a criminal offence.
- Any staff member who becomes aware of predatory or “grooming” behaviour must disclose that information to the Police

### **Responsibilities**

#### **A. School Staff**

- Act in accordance with the school’s **Child Safety** and all obligations to comply with all child safe standards and obligations outlined by the Department of Education and Training (PROTECT), which clearly sets out the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour;
- Act in accordance with the school’s Mandatory Reporting policy and procedures at all times;
- Undertake annual guidance and training on child safety;
- Act in accordance with their relevant legal requirements and all obligations, as detailed above.

#### **B. Principal and Board of Directors**

- Consider the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable, when implementing the Child Safe Standards;
- Ensure that child safety is a regular standing agenda item at Board meetings and included in the Board risk reporting for ongoing monitoring;
- Encourage and enable staff professional learning and training to build deeper understandings of child safety and prevention of abuse;
- Ensure that no one is prohibited or discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to a person external to the school or from making records of any allegation;
- Undertake annual training on child safety and review available child safety information resources.
- The Principal will notify the Commission for Children and Young People (“CCYP”) if a reportable allegation has been made against a member of staff or volunteer within 3 days of being made aware of the allegation and comply with all other CCYP reporting requirements under the Reportable conduct Scheme.

### **Listening to, communicating with and empowering children**

- Students will be taught, through the schools’ Wellbeing program, how to identify and report abuse through age-appropriate education of child abuse awareness and prevention. Programs designed to promote child safety are included in the school Curriculum, and will be reviewed and updated regularly.
- When the school 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 and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (and/or their parents/carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.
- Each matter will be dealt with on a case by case basis to ensure each student is provided with support they require as an individual. The school will work closely with the student and parents/guardians to determine the support services most appropriate to that student and their situation. Such support may include referral to external counselling services, family counselling, or academic support.
- Procedures and guidelines for teachers when handling student disclosures of abuse are included in Appendix 1 of the Mandatory Reporting Policy. Teachers are required to follow these guidelines to ensure that the child is left feeling reassured that something will be done to keep them safe.

## **Risk Management – reducing and removing risks of child abuse**

- In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (as noted above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, Casey Grammar School proactively manages risks of abuse to all students.
- The school has 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 (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).
- Child Safety is a key risk on the Casey Grammar School risk register, with mitigation actions and risk monitoring conducted by the Risk, Policy and Nominations Committee and reported at each School Board meeting. A separate Child Safety Risk register is implemented to monitor all Child Safety risks and will be reviewed by the Risk, Policy and Nominations Committee every 12 months. This will be managed by the Casey Grammar School Risk and Compliance Manager.

## Evaluation

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. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Review: Every two years, and as incidents arise.

Last review: April 2020

Next review required before April 2022.

### **Related Legislation:**

Ministerial Order No. 870 Child Safe Standards  
Children, Youth & Families Act 2005  
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005  
Education and Training Reform Act 2006  
Working with Children Act 2005  
Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)  
Family Violence Protection Act 2008

### **Related Casey Grammar School Policies:**

Duty of Care  
Mandatory Reporting  
Student Welfare  
Negligence  
On-Site Supervision  
Child Safe Code of Conduct  
Staff Employment

## **Resources**

- [Department of Justice and Community Safety 'grooming' offence fact sheet](#)
- [Department of Justice Community Safety 'Failure to protect' fact sheet](#)
- [Department of Justice and Community Safety 'Failure to disclose' fact sheet](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- [Reporting to the Commission for Children and Young People](#)