



Presbyterian Ladies' College

MELBOURNE

PLC CHILD SAFETY POLICY

1. 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 assists in maintaining a high level of professional standards.

2. 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:

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

- i) Child protection training is mandatory for all PLC Council members, staff, contractors and volunteers
- j) Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the College community
- k) 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
- l) Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

3. Risk Management

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

- a) provide a safe learning environment for its students
- b) identify risks of child abuse and mitigate those risks
- c) assist staff to detect child abuse
- d) care for a student who may be a victim of abuse
- e) 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.

4. 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.

5. Staff Recruitment, Induction and Training

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.

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.

New staff will 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 new staff must sign an agreement indicating that they have read, understood, and will abide by the PLC Child Safety Policy and the PLC Child Safety Staff Code of Conduct.

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

6. 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.

Any visitors to the College requesting to speak to or meet with individual day students must be directed to either the Deputy Principal (Pastoral, Staff and Students), the Director of Student Wellbeing or the relevant Year Level Co-ordinator in the Senior School and the Head of Junior School in the Junior School.

Guidelines around visitors to boarding house students are outlined in the College's Boarding policies.

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.

7. Deliveries Addressed to Students

Any deliveries addressed to day students received by the College from outside of the College Community will be re-directed to the student's listed home address. This applies to communications that may include letters, parcels or packages, regardless of whether they are hand-addressed, typed, hand-delivered or delivered through a postal or courier service.

Management of deliveries addressed to boarding students is outlined in the College's Boarding policies.

8. 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 (Pastoral, Staff and Students), Deputy Principal (Curriculum, Learning and Administration), Head of Junior School, Head of Learning Enhancement Department (JS), Head of ELC and Heads of Boarding oversee the implementation of child safety policies and practices.

9. 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:

Department	Child Safety Officers
Early Learning Centre	Mrs Deborah Hendren (Head of ELC)
Junior School	Dr Michelle Cafini (Head of Junior School)

Department	Child Safety Officers
	Mrs Prue Petsinis (Head of Learning Enhancement Department)
Senior School	Mrs Anne-Marie Williams (Deputy Principal (Pastoral, Staff and Students)) – Senior Child Safety Officer
	Ms Kim Watkins (Director of Student Wellbeing)
	Ms Anna Taranto (Head of Counselling)
Boarding House	Mrs Rachel Manderson (Head of Boarding)
Sport	Mrs Jen Rivett (Director of Sport)
Aquatic Centre	Mrs Shelly Hawkins (Aquatic Centre Manager)
Non-Teaching Staff	Mr Hamish Blair (Business Manager)

10. Reporting Procedures

The College has implemented the following procedures as outlined in the flow charts: 'Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending'¹ and 'Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse'²:

- a) Staff are trained to report concerns regarding student safety to a Child Safety Officer. The Child Safety Officers, in consultation with a School Counsellor will be able to assist in clarifying concerns and managing the next steps. (If a particular Child Safety Officer is not available, all Child Safety Officers are trained to respond.)
- b) 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
- c) 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
- d) All suspected or known cases of abuse will be reported to Child Protection at the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Victoria or the Police (see end of this document for definition of 'abuse'). Further detail should be referenced from PLC's Child Protection Program on Wyse
- e) All reports of Child Abuse made to DFFH Child Protection or Child FIRST must also be copied to the Principal.
- f) Should an allegation of suspected abuse be made, PLC is committed to protecting the child and will:
 - i. listen sensitively to the student

¹ https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_SSO.pdf

² https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf

- ii. protect the student and keep them safe
- iii. inform appropriate authorities
- iv. monitor the ongoing wellbeing of the student
- v. record, make secure and retain all documentation using the appropriate template:
 - Responding to Suspected Student Sexual Offending³
 - Responding to Suspected Child Abuse⁴

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.

11. 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:

- a) Take immediate action to protect children from further potential for abuse
- b) 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
- c) Ensure investigation of the allegation occurs, that appropriate action is taken in response and records of the outcome are kept
- d) Report the finding and reasons for the outcome to the CCYP at the conclusion of the investigation.

12. Student Empowerment

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

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

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

13. 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

³ https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/SSO_template_interactive_03112016.pdf

⁴ https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/PROTECT_Responding_TemplateSchools.pdf

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.

14. 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.

For any College authorised distance education programs that are delivered through an online school environment, the College will implement procedures and communicate guidelines to parents/guardians and students to promote the safety of all students participating in the program. Guidelines that are communicated to parents/guardians will outline the responsibilities of parents in ensuring a safe online learning environment including, for example, an appropriate physical space for distance learning and their responsibility for monitoring online safety at home.

15. 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.

16. Definitions

Refer to Appendix 1 for key definitions.

Approved: Cheryl Penberthy, Principal

Date: November 2020

Review date: October 2021

APPENDIX 1: KEY DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Child	Any student enrolled at a school (Ministerial Order 870)
Child abuse	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Any act committed against a child involving <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) sexual offence b) grooming of a child (grooming a child for sexual purposes under the age of 16 years) 2. Infliction on a child of <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) physical violence b) serious emotional or psychological harm 3. Serious neglect of a child <p>(From Section 1.1.3(1) of the <i>Education and Training Reform Act 2006</i>)</p> <p>All adults in Victoria, 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 (<i>Crimes Act 1958</i> (Vic))</p>
College Community	Includes any students of the College and School staff (refer definition below)
Family Violence	<p>While the term ‘family violence’ does not form part of the official definition of ‘child abuse’, the impact of family violence on a child is commonly referred to as a form of child abuse. In Victoria, section 5 of the <i>Family Violence Protection Act 2008</i> (Vic) defines “family violence” as behavior by a person towards a family member that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physically or sexually abusive • emotionally or psychologically abusive • economically abusive • threatening • coercive • in any other way controlling or dominating the family member and causes them to feel fear for their own, or other family member’s safety or wellbeing. <p>Behaviour that causes a child to hear, witness, or be exposed to the effects of such behaviour also falls within the definition of “family violence”.</p>
School staff	<p>In a non-government school means an individual working in a school environment who is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">b) a volunteer or a contracted service providerc) a minister of religion
School environment	<p>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</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) a campus of the schoolb) online school environments (including email and intranet systems)c) 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)