

## CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY



### Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the school Policy Leader on 9112 9500 or via email [info@footscray.vic.edu.au](mailto:info@footscray.vic.edu.au)

## PURPOSE

The Footscray High School's 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](#) (PDF, 363KB) 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.

We are a school community where every member shares responsibility to demonstrate the values of Footscray High School, in order to support an environment of high expectations, connection and safety.

## 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.

## 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

Footscray High School consists of 2 year 7-9 campuses and one 10-12 campus. Footscray High School has developed close ties to the local community, and enjoys support from our local shops and community services.

Footscray High School 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 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 Child Safety Code of Conduct, which sets out clearly the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Each school campus of Footscray High School will have a child safety officer. Please see the role outline.

Specific child safety responsibilities:

- Child Safety Officer is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy every 2 years.
- Child Safety Officer is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy. The school community should approach this person if they have any ongoing concerns
- Child Safety Officer is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available.
- International Student Coordinator is responsible for monitoring the homestay and international student wellbeing.
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in Footscray High School's other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, and risk assessment register.

## CHILD SAFETY PRINCIPLES

In its planning, decision-making and operations Footscray High School 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. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations' where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers
11. Work with external education providers to ensure students are protected in all school environment.
12. Support all international students at Footscray High School to feel safe and protected in all environments.

## POLICY

### A child safe culture

Footscray High School's culture encourages staff, students, parents and the school community to raise, discuss and scrutinise child safety concerns. This makes it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

All child safety documents, including this policy, the Child Safety Code of Conduct, the school's Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, *Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools* and the *Four Critical Actions for Schools* are readily available online and in hard copy in both campuses and on the Schools website for all staff and students to read at any time.

The School has resources in Basic English to support student's international students and English as an Additional Language students to understand the schools obligations, these are available with the international student coordinator, the child safety officers and the student health and wellbeing team at each campus.

Child safety is everyone's responsibility.

**All school staff** are required to:

- Act in accordance with the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct, which clearly sets out the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour
- Act in accordance with the Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures at all times, including following the *Four Critical Actions for Schools* where necessary
- Act in accordance with their legal obligations, including:
  - Failure to disclose offence (applies to all adults)
  - Duty of care (applies to all school staff)
  - Mandatory reporting obligations (applies to all mandatory reporters, including teachers, principals, registered psychologists, and registered doctors and nurses)
  - Failure to protect offence (applies to a person in a position of authority within the school)
  - Reportable conduct obligations (applies to school leadership roles)
  - Organisational duty of care (applies to the school as an organisation)

- For more information on these obligations, see [https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/ChildSafeStandard5\\_SchoolsGuide.pdf](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/ChildSafeStandard5_SchoolsGuide.pdf).

As part of Footscray High School's child safe culture, the **transition** work will:

- Support for Students transitioning campus of Footscray High School, including induction, orientation programs, careers and pathways support, and allocated support staff for students with special needs and wellbeing referrals transferred.
- Support for Year 7 cohort includes a transition program including information sessions, orientation day, coordinating transition of strategies from primary school.
- Support for Year 9 transition to the Senior Kinnear Campus, including information sessions, orientation day, events and transition of strategies from junior school to senior school
- Support for students learning with external providers, including Child Safe Standards and Workplace Learning Fact Sheet included in the Employer Pack.
- Supports for international students include, provide a tailored orientation and transition programs for all international students, homestay support and welfare checks, Access to translation and interpretive services as required.

As part of Footscray High School's child safe culture, **school leadership** will:

- Ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings and staff meetings
- 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.

As part of Footscray High School's child safe culture, **school mandatory reporting staff** are required to:

- Complete the [Protecting Children – Mandatory reporting and other obligations](#) online module every year
- Read the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document
- Read the school's Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document
- Read the school's Child Safety Policy (this document) on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document.

School leadership will maintain records of the above processes.

## **SUITABLE STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

At Footscray High School, 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.

All prospective volunteers are required to comply with our school's Volunteers Policy, including in relation to obtaining checks required under this policy. All prospective volunteers are required to abide by the volunteer requirements outlined in the volunteer policy.

### **Staff Recruitment**

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



- [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.
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## TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in the school understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our school culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in coming forward with any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse. This training occurs annually or more often as required.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse, to promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be inducted into the school and supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school's commitment to child safety, and that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. All employees of our school will be monitored and assessed via regular performance review to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported to the Principal or Assistant Principal and will be managed in accordance with Footscray High School's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Policy and Procedures where required.

As part of the transition to the new school environment the following strategies have been developed to support staff training, induction and supervision:

- WWCC or Victorian Institute of Teaching registration register review
- Recruitment practices to follow the DET recruitment in schools guide
- Homestay engagement guidelines and processes.
- Strategies developed to embed culture of child safety
- Footscray High School Performance management process
- Footscray High School professional learning teams
- Footscray High School coaching program
- Staff induction training to be held in Term 4 and January 2020.
- Staff roles in the new school moved and integrated with new staff.
- Code of conduct and behaviour expectations to be embedded through staff meetings/ leadership meetings throughout the year.
- All staff to undertake the eLearning mandatory reporting module.

## REPORTING A CHILD SAFETY CONCERN OR COMPLAINT

The school has clear expectations for all staff 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 Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, including following the Four Critical Actions for Schools if there is an incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse.

Immediate actions should include reporting their concerns to DHHS Child Protection/Victoria Police 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.

Footscray High 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 Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures. In accordance with Action 4 of the Four Critical Actions for Schools, Footscray High School will provide ongoing support for students affected by child abuse.

The Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures can be found on the schools website.

## RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT

Footscray High School believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes, found in the risk assessment register. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.

We will identify and mitigate the risks of child abuse in school environments by taking into account the nature of each school environment, the activities expected to be conducted in that environment and the characteristics and needs of all children expected to be present in that environment.

Footscray High School will ensure that it keeps, reviews and continually updates a risk assessment register, including the actions the school will take to reduce or remove the identified risks.

Footscray High School risk register reflects the unique environment of the school and acknowledges the following risk are of key focus

- Transition arrangements for students onto new campuses / new school communities.
- Students Bullying and Harassment in new school environment
- No Organisational culture of child safety – lack of leadership, public commitment and frequent messaging
- Students learning with external providers
- International students including the homestay and WWC check requirements.

## LISTENING TO, COMMUNICATING WITH, AND EMPOWERING CHILDREN

Footscray High School 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. Our 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.

Students can access information on how to report abuse at the schools Compass portal, with the Wellbeing team, Campus Child Safety Officer, international Student Coordinator, school reception.



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 of things and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (or their parents/carers, where appropriate) informed about progress.

The school will promote the Child Safe Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children, including:

- All of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for the students at Footscray High School to read
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school
- School newsletters will inform students and the school community about the school's commitment to child safety, and strategies or initiatives that the school is taking to ensure student safety
- Students transition to Year 7 and between campuses or schools, child safe information included in induction, orientation programs and allocated support staff for students with special needs and wellbeing referrals transferred.
- Students undertaking learning with an external provider, given child safe information and resources by the Workplace learning Community pre-placement checklist discussion with students
- International Students
  - Child Safe Standards materials will be provided during orientation and pre-arrival, and on a regular basis while at the school.
  - Provide and explain international students with the Easy English Protect Factsheet to identify reportable conduct and how to report it.
  - Regular communication with students to obtain feedback on homestay environment
- The whole school is encouraged to contribute to risk assessment and mitigation, the Child Safe Standards are addressed and explained at assemblies or parent information sessions.

The school will use its health and wellbeing programs to deliver appropriate education to its students about:

- standards of behaviour for students attending the school;
- healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality);
- resilience; and
- child abuse awareness and prevention.

Through the critical and creative thinking and the personal and social capability curriculum Footscray High School will deliver the respectful, rights and resilience program and STRIDE peer support programs to ensure all students develop skills to communicate effectively, negotiate and resolve conflict and become confident, resilient and adaptable.

## **CHILD SAFETY CHAMPION**

Schools can nominate a senior staff member as a child safety champion to support child safety. In large or multi-campus schools, more than one child safety champion can be nominated.

Child safety champions must have the status and authority to work with and influence others.

The role:

- requires knowledge and professional judgement on child safety and wellbeing
- needs support through ongoing training and mentoring
- maybe a suitable development opportunity for aspiring school leaders.



The Child Safety Champions of Footscray High School will be the focal point in the whole school community for allegations of child abuse and any concerns about child safety which may result in a mandatory report. Child safety champions work with the school leadership team, teachers, students, volunteers and the school community to create a child safe environment in the school.

The Child Safety Champions at Footscray High School are:

- Assistant Principals
- Leading teacher Wellbeing and Inclusion

The Child Safety Champions Responsibilities are to:

Promote child safety culture

- Promote child safety and wellbeing. For example, at staff and parent meetings, through newsletters and staff bulletins.
- Ensure the school's child safety policies and procedures:
  - are current and fit for purpose
  - are publicly accessible
  - are known and implemented.
- Promote a culture of listening to students and families and acting on their child safety concerns.
- Support staff and volunteers to focus on the child safety needs of vulnerable students.

Provide support and guidance

- Be a point of contact for child safety concerns for staff, volunteers and students.
- Provide guidance to students, staff and volunteers on child safety policies and procedures.
- Work with school leadership to respond to child safety incidents.
- Maintain current skills and knowledge to support child safety and wellbeing, including:
  - child-focused complaint processes, reporting obligations and the Four Critical Actions (PDF-215KB)
  - student rights, participation and empowerment
  - Aboriginal cultural safety and inclusive practices to meet students diverse needs
  - child safety risk management including online safety
  - child safety information sharing and record-keeping obligations
  - working with relevant agencies to refer students and families to appropriate support
  - keeping across emerging research and best practice guidance in child safety and wellbeing.

Train and educate

- Provide child safety induction programs for new school staff, volunteers and school council members.
- Provide child safety training for school staff, volunteers and school council members.
- Ensure mandatory reporters complete the annual mandatory reporting training.
- Provide child safety updates and information to staff and volunteers, as needed.





Monitor, review and report

- Record child safety complaints and concerns, and analyse trends as needed.
- Coordinate reviews following significant safety incidents and recommend improvements.
- Maintain the school's child safety risk register with the school leadership team.
- Coordinate child safety policy and practice reviews in consultation with the school community.
- Maintain detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals.

## COMMUNICATION

This school is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- Ensuring that the Child Safety Policy (this document), Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedure are available on the school website and via the compass portal.
- Ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings and staff meetings for discussion.
- Homestay providers will be provided with all Child Safety policies and expectations and procedures for reporting any abuse are discussed with homestay hosts as part of the induction process. Discussion at all house visits.
- External providers communication includes
  - All contracts with external providers to follow Department guidelines.
  - The Footscray High School Child Safety Policy statement to be included in the Employer Pack.
  - Child Safe Standards and Workplace Learning Fact Sheet included in the Employer Pack.
  - Child Safe environment specific questions included into the Student Pre Placement Checklist.
  - All partners involved in the SBAT development and sign up process are provided with the Footscray High School Child Safety Policy statement.
  - Updated DET forms for Workplace Learning Arrangement Forms and Travel Forms are used, which include reference to Child Safe Standards.

## CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

This school 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 Department of Education and Training's Schools' Privacy Policy available at the following link: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/schoolsprivacypolicy.aspx>

## RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related school policies, procedures, and codes. These include our:

- Code of Conduct
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
- Risk assessment register
- School Policy and Advisory Guide – Duty of Care
- School Policy and Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations.

## 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 STATUS AND REVIEW

The Child Safety Officers are responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at least every two years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school council community.

## REVIEW AND APPROVAL

<b>Policy last reviewed</b>	2019
<b>Consultation</b>	School Council - May 2023
<b>Endorsed by</b>	Executive Principal
<b>Endorsed on</b>	May 2023
<b>Mandatory minimum review cycle</b>	2 Years
<b>Next review date</b>	May 2025