

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

PURPOSE

The Footscray High School 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.

Footscray High School is committed to providing a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment for all students. We understand that students reach their full potential only when they are happy, healthy and safe, and that a positive school culture, where student participation is encouraged and valued, helps to engage students and support them in their learning. Our school acknowledges that student wellbeing and student learning outcomes are closely linked.

The objective of this policy is to support our school to create and maintain a safe, supportive and inclusive school environment consistent with our school's values.

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 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, queer, questioning and asexual (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 consisting of the Principal, Assistant Principal and Wellbeing Leader 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.

Principals and assistant principals 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, and 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

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school or the Department of Education, 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

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

- promote a child safe culture with the broader school community
- ensure child safety is an agenda item at some school council meetings.
- undertake annual [child safety training](#).
- approve updates to, and act according to the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members
- when hiring school council employees, ensuring that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe. At Footscray High School, school council employment duties are delegated to the Principal who is bound by this policy.



Specific staff child safety responsibilities

Footscray High School has nominated the Wellbeing Leader as a child safety champion to support the principal in implementing our child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training. The responsibilities of the child safety champion are outlined in [Guidance for Child Safety Champions](#).

The principal and child safety champion are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

- The Wellbeing Leader and Principal monitors the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Anyone in our school community should approach the Principal or Wellbeing Leader if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- The Principal is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and Child Safety Risk Register.

Our school has also established a Child Safety and Wellbeing Team. The Child Safety and Wellbeing Team meet regularly to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing.

Our Risk Management Committee 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 Footscray High 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 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. The school leadership team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

ESTABLISHING A CULTURALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT

At Footscray High School, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.



We think about 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 have developed the following strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community:

At Footscray High School, we encourage and actively support a child or student's ability to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights in the following ways:

- equip staff, students, volunteers and the school community to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and students
- adopt measures to ensure racism is identified, confronted and not tolerated
- address any instances of racism within the school environment with appropriate consequences
- actively support participation and inclusion in the school by Aboriginal children, students and their families
- ensure school policies, procedures, systems and processes together create a culturally safe and inclusive environment and meet the needs of Aboriginal children, students and their families
- Ensure students have an Individual Education Plan, that outlines the measures and goals we have in place to maintain an inclusive and culturally safe school for Aboriginal students

STUDENT EMPOWERMENT

To support the child safety and wellbeing at Footscray High School, 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 peer support in the school to ensure a sense of belonging. We implement our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships, our student Code of Conduct, and our school pillars and values.

We inform students of their rights through our whole school approach to [Respectful Relationships the School Wide Positive Behaviour Supports](#), and 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 via the [school website](#).

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 both the students, their parents and carers, as appropriate informed about progress.

Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

We provide age-appropriate and accessible information to students such as information about:

- The school's [Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy](#) and [Code of Conduct](#).
- The Charter of Commitment under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The work of the Commission for Children and Young People
- How the adults in the school should behave.



Inform students of their rights and special protections including the right to:

- Live and grow up healthy
- Have a say about decisions affecting them
- Get information that is important to them
- Be safe and not harmed by anyone

When sharing information under the information sharing schemes:

- Work to build trust by being open and transparent about information sharing, and keep the child and family informed each time their information is shared if it is appropriate, safe and reasonable to do so
- Seek and consider the views of the child (or the relevant family members) about sharing their confidential information if it is appropriate, safe and reasonable to do so
- Provide information through the curriculum via relevant subject areas to promote:
 - Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships
 - School-wide Positive Behaviour Support Framework
 - Safe Schools
 - Bully Stoppers
 - Vic SRC's Introduction to Student Voice
 - eSmart
- Empower students to contribute to school life
- Display visually engaging and easy-to-read posters promoting student voice and agency
- Discuss commitment to student's voice at enrolment and organise orientation activities focused on activating student's voice
- Conduct year-level meetings and form groups to discuss students' rights and safety issues
- Invite students to provide feedback on school-wide decisions and take their views into account in school decision-making
- Document student participation in activities that contribute to the life of the school
- Involve students in consultation processes and inform them of their impact on decision-making
- Demonstrate that the school takes students seriously by acting on their concerns, noting that what might seem unimportant to an adult may be important to a young person
- Provide students who find it harder to speak up or be heard with multiple communication avenues, including writing, drawing, or physical forms of communication
- Empower students to raise their concerns
- Provide students with information about the complaints processes

Give students a variety of ways to raise concerns through:

- Providing an anonymous, year-level student suggestion box
- Distributing regular online surveys
- Displaying information about the adults who students can talk to if they have a concern
- Create opportunities for all student voices by being aware of discriminatory barriers and any overreliance on the input of student leaders
- Strengthen peer support for safety and wellbeing
- Display posters acknowledging sexuality and gender diversity and identify safe spaces where students can go if they need support
- Establish Student Action Teams to investigate issues of inclusion and exclusion
- Discuss healthy boundaries for friendships. Point out that the risk of harm can occur in child-to-child interactions and adult-to-child interactions
- Use school transition programs, for example Year 6 to 7, to provide support for students entering the school and years 9-10.



Teach students practical protective strategies, including:

What to do when they feel unsafe:

- Phrases they can use to raise an objection
- Pathways for raising safety concerns, and
- online safety behaviours.
- Provide contact information for independent child and youth advocacy services or helplines.
- Support all students to identify trusted adults and friends they can talk to about a concern at school, at home or in the community.
- Deliver age-appropriate curriculum content about respectful relationships, sexuality, consent and sexual abuse prevention through the Resilience Rights and Respectful Relationships teaching and learning materials as part of implementing the whole school approach to Respectful Relationships.
- Use the School's Mental Health Menu to support students in your school.
- Empower students with the knowledge that adults are accountable and that students have a right to safety.
- Communicate in a respectful and age-appropriate way
- Educate staff to uphold Aboriginal cultural safety and be respectful of identity and culture.
- Train staff and volunteers to facilitate child-friendly ways for students to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns.
- Educate staff and volunteers about children's rights
- Use sensitivity and build trust
- Provide training to staff and volunteers to be attuned to signs of harm and risk factors in students.
- Remind staff and volunteers to recognise that students might communicate in different ways, including through verbal and non-verbal cues, play, body language, facial expressions, drawings or behaviours.
- Follow through on your commitments – show students that the leadership team and staff are trustworthy and take their worries or concerns seriously.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Our 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, at Footscray High School, we are committed to providing families and the 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 developing and reviewing our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

Footscray High School will do this by:

- Sharing the [policies](#), through the school website, newsletters, other communications, school council, subcommittees of school council, student, staff, and parent meetings etc.
- All of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents [here](#).
- Newsletters and Compass Posts, will inform families and the school community about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.
- [PROTECT Child Safety posters](#) will be displayed across the school

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 and Engagement Policy](#) provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

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.

Staff recruitment

When recruiting staff, we follow the Department of Education 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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Staff induction

All newly appointed staff will 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 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 through regular performance reviews and by investigating any concerns raised.

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.

This will be in line with Ministerial Order 1359, Clause 10, and Child Safety Standard 6: People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

By delivering tailored training to all staff and volunteers, everyone will share an understanding of:

- What does child safety mean
- The importance of child safety
- What to look for, and what to do

Suitability of volunteers

All volunteers must comply with our [Volunteers Policy](#), which describes how we assess prospective volunteers' suitability and outlines expectations concerning child safety and wellbeing induction and training, as well as supervision and management.

CHILD SAFETY KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND AWARENESS

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 will 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
- Completing the Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations online module annually
- Recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
- Responding effectively to issues of child safety and 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, such as 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 trained 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
- Footscray High School's] child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices

COMPLAINTS AND REPORTING PROCESSES

Footscray High School 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 to this, and this is documented in our school's Complaint Policy. The Complaints Policy can be found [here](#).

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 complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while 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:

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

Our [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#) and [Bullying Prevention Policy](#) covers complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

COMMUNICATIONS

Footscray High School 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), the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure
- Displaying PROTECT posters around the school
- Updates in our school newsletter, school website and Compass parental portals
- Ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings.

PRIVACY AND INFORMATION SHARING

Footscray High School 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 Footscray High School, we have established processes for reviewing and improving 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 transparently, share pertinent learnings, and review outcomes with school staff and community.

RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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

- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Visitors Policy
- Volunteers Policy

All policies located [here](#).

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](#)

APPROVAL

Consultation	March 2025 - School Council
Endorsed by	Principal
Endorsed on	March 2025
Next review date	March 2027