

Tallangatta Secondary College Policy Manual	Child Safe Environment Policy	Council Meeting: December 2018
Information: 0260715000 Manager: Principal	Related Policies: Code of Practice Working with Children Policy	Reviewed: Every two years

PURPOSE

This child safe Environment Policy sets out Tallangatta Secondary College's approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe. It provides the policy framework for our school's approach to the child safe standards.

SCOPE

This policy will apply to all DET staff, volunteers, allied health professionals, contractors and visitors. This policy will extend across a range of school forums (e.g. camps)

Statement of Commitment & Principles

Tallangatta Secondary College is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

Tallangatta Secondary College has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Our school is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions which affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

Every person involved in Tallangatta Secondary College has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

In its planning, decision-making and operations, our 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 which 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 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;
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

Policy and procedures

Policies and procedures outlining school's approach to the Child Safe Standards are outlined below.

A child-safe culture

Our school's culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

Personnel understand their roles and responsibilities/ Code of conduct

Our principal will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect.

Our Code of Conduct sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Human resources practices and training

Our school applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff and will take every step to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. We will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. All prospective staff are required to undergo National Criminal History Records check and volunteers must maintain a valid "Working with Children Check."

Our Principal, under the "Failure to Protect," offence guidelines will actively manage the risks of sexual offences being committed against children in her/his care to protect them from harm.

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

Our school has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. Immediate action should include reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection and police or another appropriate agency e.g Child First, whilst also notifying the principal or a member of our school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns. Staff will be supported in their decision to make a report. The school will take immediate action to respond to a complaint.

Our school community will be educated about the charges of "Failure to Disclose," and "Grooming." If the concern relates to an employee of DET, this will be reported to the Conduct and Ethics branch who will share it with the Commission for Children and Young People (reportable conduct scheme).

Risk reduction and management

Our School believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes. We recognise that there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.

Listening to children

Our 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 which informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/carers to understand their rights and their responsibilities.

When our 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) informed about progress.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Our 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 our Privacy policy.

Policy evaluation and review

- We will consult in an ongoing manner with school community about our child safety practices
- If a potential risk or report occurs then a review and re-assessment of risk factors will occur with new risk management controls documented
- This policy will be reviewed every two years

Definitions

Ministerial Order 870 provides definitions, including:

Child abuse includes—

- any act committed against a child involving:
 - a sexual offence or
 - an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
- the infliction, on a child, of:
 - physical violence or
 - serious emotional or psychological harm
 - serious neglect of a child.

Child-connected work means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events).

School staff being: an individual working in a school environment who is:

- directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority;
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary); or
- a minister of religion.

REVIEW CYCLE AND EVALUATION

This policy is scheduled for review every two years.