
Standard 2

Policy: Child Safe Policy –

School: Benalla P-12 College

Section: Child Safe Standard 7.1

Version: Two

Child Safe Policy

Our commitment to child safety

1. Benalla P-12 College is committed to child safety. **(see Appendix 1).**
2. We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
3. We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. **(see Appendix 7).**
4. We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
5. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
6. Benalla P-12 College is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
7. Benalla P-12 College has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
8. Benalla P-12 College is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
9. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.
10. We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff, parents and volunteers to achieve these commitments.
11. All parents and visitors to the school are required to report to the relevant campus office to sign in which is reflected by signage around the campuses and regular newsletter items.
12. **If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.**

Our Students

This policy is intended to empower children and young people who are vital and active participants at Benalla P-12 College. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them.

We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.
- promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children and young people in Out of Home Care.

Our Staff and Volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

Training and Supervision

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

Our college culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing 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.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability and Out of Home Care Students.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand Benalla P-12 College's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to this organisation's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. (*see Appendix 3*). We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Benalla P-12 College understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check.

We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

Fair Procedures for Personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form. (*see Appendix 4 & 5*) including investigation updates. All records are securely stored. If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to parents and carers (and students where appropriate) on progress and any actions.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative Responsibilities

Benalla P-12 College takes our 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 that information to the police.

- **Failure to protect:** All teaching staff in our college 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. All Education Support Staff have a responsibility to report any disclosures of sexual abuse to a member of the teaching staff.

Risk management

In Victoria, schools are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place (**see Appendix 7**) 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).

Regular Review

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.

Allegations, Concerns and Complaints

Benalla P-12 College takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour

Related School Policies

This policy should be read and understood (but not limited to) in conjunction with the following school policies:

- **Child Safety Policy**
- **Anti-Bullying Policy**
- **Inclusion Policy**
- **Critical Incident Policy**
- **Mandatory Reporting Policy**
- **Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy**
- **Duty of Care Policy**
- **Working with Children Check Policy**

Basis for discretion:

The basis for discretion lies with the Principal as an operational matter.

Date Implemented	July 2016
Reviewed and Amended Version One:	March, 2019

Date of ratification by School Council: 25 March, 2019
Recommended date for review: March, 2020