



HEATHDALE CHRISTIAN COLLEGE LTD

GP 03.7 CHILD PROTECTION: POLICY

March, 2017

This document should be read in conjunction with:

- MP 03.7.1 Child Protection: Procedure;
- GP 03.7.2 Child Protection: Code of Conduct

1. PREAMBLE

The safety and well-being of children whilst in our care is of prime importance at Heathdale Christian College (the '**College**'). Our example of God as a father, nurturing his children throughout their life journey through his provision of love and guidance is an image of God as the supreme 'care giver'. Jesus speaks very strongly on the value and care of children in a number of places in the scriptures. This establishes the foundation that the College is a community that works together in partnership to establish a safe and supportive environment for all children in its care, enhancing learning opportunities and fostering spiritual, emotional, social and academic development.

Because a Christian school is called to be faithful and just, school leadership has the authority and obligation to ensure that the College environment is a safe place for all children, free of child abuse, discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment/abuse, vilification, victimisation and bullying. The College takes a strong and active stand on the protection of children.

If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse, telephone 000.

2. INTRODUCTION

The College is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse.

Everyone working at the College is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

3. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is:

- 3.1. To prevent child abuse from occurring within all School Environments;

Policy GP 03.7

Date:

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Signed: _____ (Chairman)

Print name: Trevor Sawyer (Chairman)

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- 3.2. To work towards an organisational culture of child safety;
- 3.3. To ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible child abuse and for preventing and reporting such abuse;
- 3.4. To provide guidance to staff, volunteers, contractors and directors as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within all School Environments;
- 3.5. To provide a clear statement to staff, volunteers, contractors and directors forbidding child abuse;
- 3.6. To provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be taken seriously, reported and fully investigated using appropriate external regulatory bodies (such as the police).

4. SCOPE

- 4.1. This Policy applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors and directors of the College, whether they work face-to-face, online or remotely with children.

5. POLICY

- 5.1. The College is committed to promoting and protecting at all times the best interests of children involved in its programs.
- 5.2. All children have equal rights to protection from abuse.
- 5.3. The College has zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at the College is responsible for the care and protection of the children within our care and reporting information about suspected child abuse.
- 5.4. Child protection is a shared responsibility between all staff, contractors, associates, volunteers, directors and members of the College community.
- 5.5. The College will consider the opinions of children and use their opinions to develop child protection policies.
- 5.6. The College supports and respects all children, staff, volunteers and directors. The College is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.
- 5.7. Everyone covered by the Policy must also comply with the College's Code of Conduct, which sets stringent standards for personal behaviour.

6. DEFINITIONS:

6.1. **Child** means a person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

6.2. **Child protection** means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.

6.3. **Child abuse** includes:

a. any act committed against a child involving:

i. a sexual offence; or

ii. an offence under section 498(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming); and

b. the infliction, on a child, of-

i. physical violence; or

ii. serious emotional or psychological harm; and

c. serious neglect of a child.

6.4. **School Environment** means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the College's governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

a. a campus of the College;

b. online school environments (including email and intranet systems); and

c. 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).

6.5. **Staff** means all individuals engaged by the College as employees.

7. ACCOUNTABILITIES

Role	Accountabilities
The Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has ultimate responsibility for the detection and prevention of child abuse and is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place.• Is responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures and a Code of Conduct are in place.
Principal/CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse;• Ensuring that all staff, contractors, volunteers and directors are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and the organisation's Code of Conduct;• Ensuring that all staff, contractors, volunteers and directors are aware of their obligation to observe the College's Code of Conduct (particularly as it relates to child safety);• Ensuring that all adults within the College community are aware of their obligation to report suspected physical abuse/sexual abuse of a child in accordance with these policies and procedures;• Providing support for staff, contractors, volunteers and directors in undertaking their child protection responsibilities.
Senior Staff Supervisory Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote child safety at all times;• Assess the risk of child abuse within their area of control and eradicate / minimise any risk to the extent possible;• Educate staff about the prevention and detection of child abuse; and• Facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected child abuse.
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the College's Code of Conduct, policy and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements;• Report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities (such as the police and / or the Department of Health and Human Services) and fulfil their obligations as mandatory reporters (where applicable);• Report any suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to their supervisor or the Child Protection Officer (or, if they are involved in the suspicion, to the Principal); and

Role	Accountabilities
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- Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety
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8. CHILD PROTECTION OFFICERS

8.1. Nominated Child Protection Officers (“**CPOs**”) are available to listen, discuss and clarify issues confronting individuals in relation to child physical and sexual abuse. The College CPOs will make reports on behalf of the College and ensure that adequate records are maintained. The College CPOs are the Assistant Principals, Heads of School and the College Chaplains.

9. REPORTING OBLIGATIONS

Mandatory Reporting Obligations

9.1. The *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic) (“**CYFA**”) requires certain professionals to make a report to the Department of Health and Human Services (“**DHHS**”) when, in the course of their position or employment:

- a. they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection because the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse; and
- b. the child's parents or caregiver have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm.

9.2. At the College, mandatory reporters include the Principal, registered teachers and nurses (“**Mandatory Reporters**”).

9.3. Mandatory reporters are required by law to notify the DHHS, as soon as practicable after forming such a belief, and after each occasion on which they become aware of any further reasonable grounds for the belief.

9.4. It is not mandatory to report emotional and psychological abuse or neglect, but you are at liberty to do so. The College encourages the reporting of all forms of child abuse.

Reasonable grounds for belief

- 9.5. A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.
- 9.6. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed if:
- a. A child states that they have been physically or sexually abused;
 - b. A child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);
 - c. Someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused;
 - d. Professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused; and/or
 - e. Signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

Voluntary reporting

- 9.7. In addition to the mandatory reporting obligations above, any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from child abuse, *may* disclose that information to the Police or the DHHS. If a person would like internal guidance or support with addressing their concerns, they are encouraged to speak with a CPO..

Reporting child sexual abuse

- 9.8. In addition to the obligations above, any person who receives information that leads them to form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child (under the age of 16 years) by another person (of or over the age of 18 years), the person has a legal obligation to disclose that information to the Police as soon as it is practicable. Individuals who fail to comply with this obligation under the *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)* may face 3 years imprisonment.

- 9.9. The College supports and encourages staff, directors, volunteers and contractors to make a report to the Police or the DHHS if they form a belief on

reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection, or they are concerned about the safety, health or wellbeing of a child.

9.10. Any staff, director, volunteer or contractor that makes a report in good faith in accordance with their reporting obligations will be supported by the College, and will not be penalised by the College for making the report.

9.11. If a staff, director, volunteer or contractor is uncertain as to whether they should make a report to an external authority in relation to the safety of a child, they should speak to the [CPO/Principal] for guidance and information. Ultimately, it is a personal decision of the staff, director, volunteer or contractor whether they choose to make a report to an external authority or not.

9.12. If an allegation is made against a staff, director, volunteer or contractor, the Principal will follow the reporting procedure and take all steps to ensure that safety of the child is paramount. An initial step will involve the withdrawal of the accused person from active duty, which could entail standing down, reassignment to a role without direct contact with children, working under closer supervision during the investigation, working from home, or any other measures deemed appropriate depending on the seriousness of the allegation.

10. EMPLOYMENT OF NEW PERSONNEL

10.1. The College undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all staff, volunteers, contractors and directors which aims to:

- a. promote and protect the safety of all children under the care of the organisation;
- b. identify the safest and most suitable people who share the College's values and commitment to protect children; and
- c. prevent a person from working at the College if they pose a risk to children.

10.2. The College requires all staff, volunteers, contractors, directors to pass through the organisation's recruitment and screening processes including a *Working with Children's Check* and/or *Police Check* (as may be required) prior to commencing their engagement with the College. The College will

also make reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about a person whom it proposes to engage to perform child-connected work:

- a. proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications;
 - b. the person's history of work involving children; and
 - c. references that address the person's suitability for the job and working with children.
- 10.3. Persons applying for a role as a teacher with the College must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching.
- 10.4. The College may require applicants to provide a police check in accordance with the law and as appropriate, before they commence working at the College and during their time with the College at regular intervals.
- 10.5. The College will undertake thorough reference checks in accordance with the approved internal procedure.
- 10.6. Each job or category of jobs for College staff, directors, volunteers and contractors that involves child-connected work will have a clear statement that sets out:
- a. the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety; and
 - b. the job occupant's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety.
- 10.7. All applicants for jobs that involve child-connected work for the College will be informed about the College's child safety practices (including the Child Protection Policy, Code of Conduct and Procedure).
- 10.8. Once engaged, staff, volunteers, contractors and directors must review and acknowledge their understanding of this Policy.

11. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 11.1. The College will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach.

- 11.2. The College will have a risk and compliance sub-committee committed to identifying and managing risks at the College Risk Management sub-committee members will receive regular training in relation to child safety.
- 11.3. If the risk and compliance sub-committee identifies risks of child abuse occurring in one or more School Environments the committee will make a record of those risks and specify the action(s) the College will take to reduce or remove the risks (i.e. risk controls).
- 11.4. The College will ensure that appropriate training at least annually is conducted for directors, staff, and volunteers. Contractors will be provided with training during their induction process, however the College will ensure that they are provided with follow-up training annually where appropriate.

12. COMMUNICATION

- 12.1. The College is pro-active in the area of prevention and will communicate the child protection policies and procedures in the manner below. Assistant Principals and the Principal / CEO are responsible for disseminating and communicating the Child Protection Policy, Code of Conduct and Procedure in the manner below.

STUDENTS	PARENTS, GUARDIANS, COMMUNITY, SPONSORS, PARTNERS	STAFF, VOLUNTEERS, CONTRACTORS, BOARD MEMBERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditions of enrolment • Website • College assemblies • Student Wellbeing Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditions of enrolment (Parents will receive a hard and electronic copy) • Website • Parent information evenings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Letters of appointment/ contracts • New staff, directors, volunteers and contractors

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• College newsletter	Induction Training and refresher training <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annual Training Session
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13. INVESTIGATING CONCERNS

- 13.1. If the appropriate child protection service or the police decide to conduct an investigation of this report, all staff, contractors, volunteers and directors must co-operate fully with the investigation.
- 13.2. Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, the Principal / CEO will consult with the authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate. If it is decided that such an investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the Principal / CEO may decide to conduct such an investigation. All staff, contractors, volunteers and directors must co-operate fully with the College's investigation.
- 13.3. Any such investigation will be conducted according to the rules of natural justice.
- 13.4. The Principal / CEO will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other members of staff may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.
- 13.5. After an initial review and a determination that the suspected abuse warrants additional investigation, the Principal / CEO shall coordinate the investigation with the appropriate investigators and / or law enforcement officials. Internal or external legal representatives will be involved in the process, as deemed appropriate.

14. RESPONDING

- 14.1. If it is alleged that a member of staff, contractor, volunteer or director may have committed an offence or have breached the organisation's policies or

its Code of Conduct, the person concerned may be stood down (with pay, where applicable) while an investigation is conducted.

- 14.2. If the investigation concludes that on the balance of probabilities an offence (or a breach of the organisation's policies or Code of Conduct) has occurred then disciplinary action may follow, up to and including dismissal or cessation of involvement with the organisation. The findings of the investigation will also be reported to any external body as required.

15. RECORD KEEPING

- 15.1. All reports of alleged abuse or harm, or risk thereof, must be recorded in the form of an incident report that contains places, times, dates, names of people, observable behaviours and/or evidence of harm. Reports must be to be securely stored by the Assistant Principals or the Principal / CEO.

16. PRIVACY

- 16.1. All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. The College will have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected.
- 16.2. Everyone is entitled to know how the personal information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will be able to access it.

17. REVIEWING

- 17.1. Every two years, and following every reportable incident, a review shall be conducted to assess whether the organisation's child protection policies or procedures require modification to better protect the children under the organisation's care.

COLLEGE RELATED DOCUMENTS:

<i>Reference</i>	<i>Policy/Guideline</i>
GP 03.1	Privacy Policy
GP 03.2	Risk Management V2

Policy GP 03.7

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Reference	Policy/Guideline
MP 03.2.1	Risk Management Procedures V2
GP 03.4	Grievance Management Plan
GP 03.5	Discrimination, Harassment, Vilification, Victimisation & Bullying
MP 03.5.3	Student Bullying Policy
GP 03.7	Child Protection: Policy
MP 03.7.1	Child Protection: Procedures
MP 03.7.2	Child Protection: Code of Conduct
GP 05.1	Equal Opportunity Policy
GP 05.2	Staff Performance & Conduct Management Policy
MP 05.3.1	Employment Procedures Guideline
GP 05.6	Working with Children Guideline
GP 06.3	Policy for Student Discipline
GP 07.4	Mandatory Reporting Policy
GP 07.5	Working with Children

REFERENCES

Legislative and other external references

- Family Law Act 1975 (Cth)
- Crimes Act 1958 (VIC)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (VIC)
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (VIC)
- VIT Teachers Code of Conduct.

Reviewed every 3 years

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