



## Child Safe Environment Policy (Child Safe Standard 2)

### **Rationale:**

Every student has right to feel safe and protected at school. Schools have a duty of care to provide a safe and supportive school environment. It is important to us that parents feel confident that their child is safe and well whilst at school. Promotion of child safe strategies must be in context of a whole-school approach. This policy sets out the school's approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe; and provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

### **Aims:**

Beechworth Secondary College will actively promote a positive, safe and welcoming personal environment for all members of the school community. On 26 November 2015, the Victorian Parliament passed the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015* to introduce seven child safe standards (the Standards) into law. The Standards apply to all organisations involved in child-related work in Victoria.

### **Implementation:**

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and contractors, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people, across a range of school forums (e.g. camps, online) and outside of school hours.

The Child Safe Policy should be considered in the School Strategic Plan. It should be included on the school website and in the staff handbook.

### **Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Principles:**

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

#### **Beechworth Secondary College has zero tolerance for child abuse.**

Beechworth Secondary College 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 that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety, participation, empowerment and equal participation of Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

Every person involved in Beechworth 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 Beechworth Secondary College 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.

## **Child Safe Policy and Procedures:**

Policies and procedures outlining Beechworth Secondary College's approach to the Child Safe Standards are outlined below. For more information, you can speak with the principal or Student Safety and Wellbeing Coordinator.

### **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. The school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/carers.

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 possible) informed about progress.

This policy is intended to empower our students. We involve them when making decisions, especially relating to 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.

### **Ensuring Personnel understand their roles and responsibilities by adhering to the Child Safe Code of Conduct**

The school's Code of Conduct sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour with children in our school.

School leaders will ensure that each person involved in working with children understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect.

## **Staff and volunteers will comply with our school's Code of Conduct.**

### **Training and Supervision**

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in at Beechworth Secondary College understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our school's 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; promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school'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. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

### **Recruitment**

Beechworth Secondary College takes all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our school understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical, as well as legislative, obligations.

We complete reference checks, Victorian Institute of Teaching 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.

We actively encourage applications from all suitably qualified people, including people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds.

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. Please see the [Working with Children Check](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> for further information.

#### 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, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

#### 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.

#### Reporting a Child Safety Concern, Complaint or Allegation

Beechworth Secondary College takes all allegations seriously. We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place.

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.

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.

Detailed information for reporting a child safety concern or complaint can be found in the "Responding to and Reporting Child Abuse" policy, [Responding to and Reporting Child Abuse](#) or staff members can follow the guide [\A Step by Step Guide to making a report to Child Protection or Child FIRST.pdf](#) if they believe a child is in need of protection.

**Legislative Responsibility:** The school takes our legal responsibilities seriously and has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. The school will take action to respond to a complaint.

**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 are mandated to report that information to the police.

**Failure to protect:** People of authority (Principal class, senior staff and Welfare Leaders, Year Level Coordinators at Beechworth Secondary 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.

Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

**Duty of Care:** All school staff have a duty of care to protect the safety, health and wellbeing of children in their care. If a staff member has concerns about the safety, health and wellbeing of children in their care they should take immediate action. In the case of a child who may be in need of protection or therapeutic treatment, or where there

are significant concerns about the wellbeing of a child, school staff can discharge this duty of care by taking action which includes the following:

- notifying the Principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns. The BSC Child Safe officer is Patricia Broom – the Principal.
- reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection, Victoria Police or another appropriate agency (as identified above).

### Risk Reduction and Management

The School believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we actively manage risks of abuse to our children. We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by the school environment.

The school environment includes any physical or virtual place available or used by a child, during or outside school hours. It includes the school campus, online school environments (for example email and intranet systems) and other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events).

### Review Process:

The Child Safe Environment Policy should be reviewed every four years, in the year of a school review, and following significant incidents if they occur. It should also be reviewed and updated in response to emerging thinking, evidence and practice about the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

### References:

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Principles: Adapted from Our Community (2016) *Child Protection Toolkit: What every not-for-profit organisation must do now.*

Corryong College Child Safe Policy 2016

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Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools, Ministerial Order No. 870

### Related Policies and Documents:

- [School Policy & Advisory Guide – Duty of Care](#)
- [School Policy & Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations](#)
- [DET Child Wellbeing and Safety Framework](#)
- [School Privacy Policy](#)
- BSC Mandatory Reporting Policy
- BSC Student Engagement Policy
- BSC Cyber-Bullying Prevention Policy
- BSC Staff Code of Conduct
- BSC Employment of Personnel & Visitors policy

### 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.