



PENLEIGH AND ESSENDON GRAMMAR SCHOOL

If you require access to this policy in a language other than English, please contact the Principal's office on 9016 2000

## Child Safety Policy

### Purpose

The Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School Child Safety Policy demonstrates our commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly school, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of our school's approach to implementing **Ministerial Order No 1359 – Implementing the Child Safety Standards - Managing the risk of child abuse in schools and school boarding premises** 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.

### 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 the Board of Directors 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, 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](#) with regard to our school:

- **child**
- **child safety**
- **child abuse**
- **child-connected work**
- **child-related work**
- **school environment**
- **school staff**
- **student**
- **volunteer**

### **Statement of commitment to child safety**

Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School (PEGS) 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 First Nations Australian 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 and queer (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**

#### **Board of Directors**

In accordance with PEGS Constitution, the Board of Directors will:

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community;
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at Board meetings;
- undertake annual training on child safety;
- approve updates to, and act in accordance with the Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to Board members;
- ensure that employment selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe.

#### **Senior Staff**

Our school leadership team (comprising the Principal, Vice Principal and Heads of Section and Departments) 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.

The leadership team 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, parent information sessions and 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 and always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures;
- act in accordance with our Code of Conduct for staff, volunteers and others who interact with students;
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Procedures for Protection of Children 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.

Specific staff child safety responsibilities

### **Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors endorses the Child Safety Policy, Procedures for Protection of Children and Code of Conduct for Staff and others interacting with students, ensuring that appropriate resources are made available to allow the policies to be effectively implemented and that the Principal, Vice Principal and Senior Staff are held accountable for effective implementation.

Through its Risk Management process the Board also periodically reviews the effectiveness of strategies that have been implemented to support child safety and revises these as appropriate.

### **Principal**

The Principal is responsible and will be accountable for taking all practical measures to ensure that the Child Safety Policy, Procedures for Protection of Children and Code of Conduct for Staff and others interacting with students are implemented effectively within the school. This includes strategies to mitigate the risk of child abuse.

The Principal will provide regular updates of child safety issues to the Board of Directors, including the annual audit of risks related to child safety.

The Principal will ensure that communication on child safety issues occurs between the

school and student parents/guardians which reflects the needs of school families.

This will include:

- publication of the Child Safety Policy, Procedure for Protection of Children and the Code of Conduct for Staff and others who interact with students on the website, among other policies;
- reminders to parents in communications of our commitment to child safety;
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings and staff meetings for discussion.

The Principal will also ensure that strategies to promote student resilience, empowerment and participation are implemented in ways that are appropriate to students' needs.

### **Vice Principal**

The Vice Principal is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy. Anyone in our school community should approach the Vice Principal if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy.

The Vice Principal will oversee factors in the school's risk profile related to child safety. They will:

- communicate openly and honestly with the Principal about the risk profile of the school regarding child safety;
- respond to disclosures of suspected abuse;
- establish and monitor the children at risk register;
- communicate with parents on child safety policy and procedures.

### **Heads of Section or Department**

Heads of Section or Department are responsible for the communication of issues of child safety arising within their Section to the Principal, completion of the annual audit of risks within their Section or Department, annual training of staff concerning their obligations to uphold child safety and oversee training to support children's understanding of their rights, availability of support and how to seek assistance for themselves or others.

Senior staff will ensure that communication on child safety issues occurs between the school and student parents/guardians which reflects the needs of school families.

This will include:

- reminders to parents in term newsletters of our commitment to child safety;
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at staff meetings for discussion;
- discussion of child safety issues at parent information sessions;
- display posters related to child safety prominently;
- Senior Staff will oversee inclusion of curriculum content designed to develop student self esteem, resilience, healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality) and mutual respect at a level suited to the cohort.

### **Student Safety Officers**

A Student Safety Officer appointed within each Section or Department will support the Head of Section or Director to implement our child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training within the Section or Department.

They are required to:

- complete any additional specialised training offered by the school to support their role with respect to child safety;
- work with Senior Staff to reduce the risk of child abuse;

- encourage children's understanding of their rights, safety and available support;
- support child empowerment and participation in development of a child safe school environment;
- assist the Head of Section to fulfil annual child safety audit requirements.

### **All Staff**

All staff are required to be familiar with our Child Safety Policy, Procedures for Protection of Children and Code of Conduct for Staff and others interacting with students.

All staff must comply with their legal obligations to report child abuse and with annual training requirements. Each individual is responsible for being aware of the key risk indicators of child abuse and raising any concerns with their Head of Section or Department, the Vice Principal or Principal.

All staff are required to fulfil training requirements as directed about child safety.

Our school has also established a Student Wellbeing Committee and a Student Reference Group to provide a student voice on child safety. The Student Wellbeing Committee meet regularly to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing. The Student Reference Group provides an opportunity for students to provide input into school strategies.

### **Code of Conduct for Staff and Others Interacting with Students**

Our 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 Code of Conduct and Procedures for Protection of Children also include processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

### **Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing**

At our 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 in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for 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. Our Central Risk Committee will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

### **Establishing a culturally safe environment**

At Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of First Nations Australian culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For First Nations Australian students, we recognise the link between First Nations Australian culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for First Nations Australian students and the First Nations Australian community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

We have developed strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community and our First Nations Australian Policy outlines the measures we have in place to maintain an inclusive and culturally safe school for First Nations Australian children and students.

### **Student empowerment**

To support child safety and wellbeing at the school we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach, including by responding to surveys and participating in forums and understanding 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 inform students of their rights, based on our Mutual Respect Policy and Policy for Positive Interactions of Staff and Students 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 access information on how to report concerns on the school website, by email at [mail@pegs.vic.edu.au](mailto:mail@pegs.vic.edu.au), by telephoning the Principal's office on 9016 2000 or in person at any Section of the school.

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 them (and their parents and carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

### **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 we are committed to providing families and 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 the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

We do this by:

- Initiating surveys to monitor family opinion and offer opportunities for discussion;
- Including information on the school website, PEGSpace, newsletters, blogs and other communications;
- Discussion of child safety at staff meetings and parent information sessions;
- Publishing all of our child safety policies and procedures for students and parents on the staff and student portals of PEGSpace and on the website [www.pegs.vic.edu.au](http://www.pegs.vic.edu.au);
- Using newsletters, including the Principal's newsletter, *Altior et Sapientior*, published quarterly, to 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;
- Displaying PROTECT Child Safety posters across the school;
- Discussing the Bystander Code of Conduct and distributing information in all Sections.

## **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:

- First Nations Australian 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+.
- families experiencing difficulties related to their structure.

Our Mutual Respect Policy, First Nations Australian Policy, Gender Inclusion Policy and Individual Needs Policy provide more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

## **Suitable staff and volunteers**

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 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;
  - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

### **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 Policy (this document)
- the Code of Conduct for Staff and Others Interacting with Students
- the Procedures for Protection of Children 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**

The Policy for Positive Interactions of Staff and Students sets out our expectations for staff behaviour. Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our school policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

Staff members' suitability for employment in a child-connected role will be considered as a compulsory component in the annual Professional Review and will be monitored by the Principal as a component of the annual report to the Board of Directors on child safety.

### **Suitability of volunteers**

All volunteers are required to comply with our Volunteers Policy, which describes how we assess the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing induction and training, and supervision and management.

### **Child safety knowledge, skills and awareness**

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff members understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

The Board of Directors and all staff members, including casual staff, student teachers, contractors and other persons interacting with students will be required annually to both:

- sign the Code of Conduct for Staff and others interacting with students, and
- complete an online training package

to ensure understanding of their obligations and responsibilities to child safety.

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 an online module concerning child protection, mandatory reporting and other legal obligations;
- 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, for example, training for our volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

### **Board training and education**

To ensure our Board of Directors 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 Board 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;
- the school's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices.

### **Complaints and reporting processes**

The 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. Please



note that complaints or concerns related to child safety or breaches of the Code of Conduct should be raised directly with the Principal, Vice Principal or Head of Section.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers must follow our Procedures for Protection of Children. 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:

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

The Policy of Mutual Respect and Behaviour Management cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

### **Communications**

Penleigh and Essendon Grammar 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 Policy (this document), the Code of Conduct, Procedures for Protection of Children and Policy for Positive Interactions of Staff and Students;
- displaying PROTECT posters around the school, distributing Bystander Code of Conduct information and supporting gender equality and identity initiatives;
- updates in our regular newsletters and blogs;
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and Board meetings.

### **Privacy and information sharing**

The 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 the Privacy Policy.

### **Records management**

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing. Refer to the Privacy Policy for further information about our procedures.

### **Review of child safety practices**

The school established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of 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 with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community;
- complete annual audit of risk processes at Board and Section level.

## **Related policies and procedures**

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

- Code of Conduct for Staff and others interacting with students
- Code of Conduct for contractors, volunteers and visitors
- Complaints and Appeals Policy for Students
- Complaints and Appeals Policy for Parents, Associates and Others
- First Nations Australian Policy
- Gender Inclusion Policy
- ICT Policy
- Individual Needs Policy
- Policy for Mutual Respect and Behaviour Management
- Policy for Positive Interactions of Staff and Students
- Privacy Policy
- Procedures for Protection of Children
- Social Media Policy
- Statement of Our Behaviour
- Visitors Policy
- Volunteers Policy

## **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](#)

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