



PENLEIGH AND ESSENDON GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Policy for a Child Safe School

The purpose of this policy is to protect students from physical, sexual or psychological abuse at school and to set up safe systems to support this obligation.

Interactions with students

Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School is committed to supporting a culture of safety, trust and respect. The school encourages an environment in which relationships of staff with students and interactions between students are responsive and respectful, the diversity of students' backgrounds and personal needs are recognised and in which students' resilience, sense of security and belonging are promoted.

All staff, volunteers and others interacting with children are encouraged to interact positively, using positive language, and acknowledge and model respectful behaviour following the Code of Conduct for staff, volunteers and others interacting with children and in accordance with the published Statement of Our Behaviour.

Inappropriate behaviours including physical, sexual and psychological abuse, bullying, harassment, discrimination and violence are unacceptable and Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School is committed to working toward the elimination of these behaviours.

The school is committed to the development and maintenance of respectful and equitable relationships between staff and students. Interactions with each student are to be warm and responsive and build trusting relationships. Every student can engage with educators in meaningful, open interactions that support the acquisition of skills for life and learning. Each student is supported to feel secure, confident and included. (Refer to the National Quality Standard 5.1: Relationships with students published by the Australian Students' Education & Care Quality Authority, October 2011.)

Moreover, the school encourages an environment in which each student is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships with other students and adults. Each student is supported to work with, learn from and help others through collaborative learning opportunities. Each student is supported to manage their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts. The dignity and rights of every student are maintained at all times. (Refer to the National Quality Standard 5.2: Relationships with students published by the Australian Students' Education & Care Quality Authority, October 2011).

This policy relates to all students at the school from Kindergarten through Year Twelve and refers to professional conduct of all staff; measures for the employment and supervision of school staff in all child-connected work together with procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of suspected child abuse; identifying and

reducing or removing risks of child abuse; supporting staff, parents and students to understand, identify and report child safety matters related to the school environment; and actions to foster child empowerment and participation in the promotion of child safety within the school environment.

The policy is formulated with reference to *Ministerial Order No 870 - Child Safety Standards- Managing the risk of child abuse in schools* and the **reportable conduct scheme administered by the Commission for Children and Young People, Victoria (CCYP)**. It should be read in conjunction with the Policy for Protection of Children and Managing the Risk of Child Abuse which addresses mandated reporting by teachers and certain other professionals of suspected cases of physical and sexual abuse or failure to protect a student from harm of that type as well as community obligations related to sexual abuse or sexual grooming activities: both protection of a student from sexual abuse or sexual grooming activities and disclosure of incidences of that type. Attention is also drawn to the school's Code of Conduct for staff, volunteers and others interacting with children, to which all staff are required to adhere, and the Policy of Mutual Respect which describes expectations for student behaviour and the school's responses to bullying and other negative behaviour.

Our Privacy Policy sets out the manner in which we collect, use, disclose and manage personal information and should be consulted with reference to the requirements as set out below.

Professional conduct

Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School encourages relationships between staff and students that are supportive and caring and actively encourage learning. A clear understanding by students that staff members are professionals is fostered and whilst staff members can be interested, kind and friendly, they should not be, nor act like, friends or equals of any student.

Staff members are required to be respectful of cultural, linguistic and personal differences and to remain alert to the possibility that psychological and emotional harm, with the added potential for child abuse, may be the unintentional consequence of a failure to consider such differences.

In general terms, physical contact between staff members and students is discouraged and 'hands off' practices are recommended. Corporal punishment is forbidden and physical contact with students must not be made to punish or discipline. Any contact with a student that is prolonged or effusive or may be perceived to be of a sexual or intimate nature, such as touching on the buttocks, genitals or breasts, should be strictly avoided.

All interaction must be positive and respectful. The school acknowledges the complexities and variations in relationships and behaviours staff members may have with students from Kindergarten to Year Twelve. In general when interacting with secondary age students, staff members should not have physical contact with the students in their care unless deemed necessary when demonstrating sport, musical, dance or drama postures, or for the provision of medical care such as first aid and then, contact should occur only with the consent of the student. The school recognises that interactions between a staff member and primary age students may include greater physical contact and direct support than would be appropriate with older students. Notwithstanding these differences, it is acknowledged that a pat on the arm or shoulder to console, support or encourage a student might be appropriate from time to time when dealing with a student at any age.

Significant physical contact may be required when supporting a student with special needs. In these situations, the support should always concur with strategies agreed in consultation with the student and their parents and follow plans documented in the student's Individual Care Plan.

Electronic communication between staff members and students should be conducted in a professional manner and solely for educational purposes associated with the curriculum. In particular, staff members should not engage in social networks with or become 'friends' of students for the purpose of social interaction. Refer to Social Media Policy.

Restraint of a student

There are situations where a staff member may use physical means to reasonably restrain a student who is an immediate danger to themselves or others. It is required that the action taken is age appropriate and considered reasonable in the circumstances. There should be no other immediately evident and less restrictive means of responding to the situation and the action taken is for the minimum duration required until the danger has passed. Whilst no staff member is expected to place themselves in danger, they are expected to exercise professional judgement in responding appropriately to situations, considering the circumstances and their own physical capacity and abilities.

Following the restraint of a student, support may be required by the student and others, both students and staff members, who were involved or witnessed the incident. Such support will be offered as appropriate. Communication with the student's parents will occur as appropriate, and will include discussion of decisions addressing the student's wellbeing and needs with reference the Mutual Respect Policy and the Individual Needs Policy. An incident report will be prepared for the Principal and a record kept when follow-up actions or support are required.

After hours contact

Staff members might attend an after-hours function such as a private party or be present at a public venue where PEGS students are present. If the staff member decides that a student may be at risk of harm he or she should take reasonable measures to reduce that risk. The staff member must then inform the Head of Section at the earliest opportunity of the risk and of the staff member's response.

Staff selection, supervision and management practices

Each job listing which involves student-related work will have a clear statement that sets out the job requirement, responsibilities and duties regarding student safety, and includes essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to student safety. This includes the requirement for compulsory adherence to the Code of Conduct for staff and others who interact with children.

In accordance with statutory requirements, the school will, where possible, gather, verify and record the following for staff it proposes to engage to perform child-connected work:

- Working with Children Check status;
- Proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications;
- Person's history of work involving children; and

- References that address the person's suitability for the job and for working with children.

The school will provide suitable supervision and support to new staff and induction into the school's policies, codes and practices related to protection of children. It will ensure that these policies are available for staff reference, i.e. on PEGSpace, and updated at regular and assigned intervals.

All staff members will be required to sign the Code of Conduct for staff and others working with children when commencing employment at the school and training to ensure that understanding of their obligations and responsibilities will occur annually. Staff members' suitability to continue in a child-connected role will be monitored as a compulsory component of staff management in the annual performance review.

Responding to and reporting allegations of suspected child abuse

The school is committed to upholding its responsibility to reduce or remove any substantial risk that a child will become a victim of abuse committed by anyone associated with the school. As stated in the Code of Conduct, if any member of staff or other person who interacts with students at Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School forms a reasonable belief that a child has been abused or is at risk of abuse they should notify the Head of Section, Vice Principal or Principal as soon as is reasonably practicable, preferably within one day.

A reasonable belief that a child has been abused or is at risk of abuse is likely formed in circumstances where:

- a child discloses that he or she has suffered or is suffering non-accidental physical injury, sexual abuse, psychological or emotional abuse or is victim of a sexual grooming activity;
- a relative, friend or acquaintance states that a child has been non-accidentally injured, sexually abused, psychologically or emotionally abused or is victim of a sexual grooming activity; or
- professional observations of the child's physical condition or behaviour lead to a reasonable suspicion that the child has suffered non-accidental physical injury, sexual abuse, psychological or emotional abuse or is victim of a sexual grooming activity.

If a staff member suspects that a child is in need of protection within the school environment they should document their concerns and observations in a confidential file for discussion with the Head of Section, Vice Principal or Principal. The Head of Section, Vice Principal or Principal will act in accordance to the Policy for the Protection of Children and Managing the Risk of Child Abuse.

The staff member should not discuss this information with staff members other than the Head of Section, Vice Principal, Principal during the period of investigation.

The Principal will respond to any allegation of reportable conduct involving a worker or volunteer, by informing the CCYP and referral to the Victorian Police will also occur where this is appropriate. An investigation of the allegation will occur and at the conclusion of the investigation, the findings with reasons for the outcomes will be reported to the CCYP.

When the Principal is aware that substantial risk of abuse to a child in the school from an adult or another student associated with the school exists, they will act to reduce or remove the risk. Where a complaint is made against an adult, the person will be removed from any child-related role pending an investigation. Records of the allegation together with the school's response will be retained by the school.

A staff member who makes an allegation of child abuse to school management is free to report the allegation to the appropriate government authorities regardless of the conclusion reached following an investigation conducted by school authorities.

Strategies to be taken to reduce the risk of child abuse and promote child empowerment

Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School promotes a caring, respectful and inclusive culture based on its Policy of Mutual Respect and Statement of Our Behaviour. Discussion of behavioural expectations will be held regularly with students at every level and information summarising policies displayed widely in classrooms for reference by staff and students.

In recognition of the potential for abusive situations, the Heads of Section will employ risk management strategies in monitoring the school environment and activities in which a staff member is alone with children. This may include consideration of the potential for abuse associated with circumstances of the physical environment, including risk related to the layout of school buildings and grounds, the appropriate use of the electronic environment, including social networks, and the potential for risk during co-curricular activities. Guidelines for appropriate communication between staff and students using electronic media are also published elsewhere. Refer to the Code of Conduct for staff, volunteers and others interacting with students and the Social Media Policy.

The school will also protect children from potential abuse by requiring that a valid Working with Children Check (WCC) is provided for all staff employed by an external agency when working on school property on a regular basis or for an extended period, as well as personnel involved in student-related activities during an excursion, study tour, student exchange placement or other activity organized by the school. Where it is necessary for short-term work to be carried out on school property by a worker not holding a valid WCC, they will be accompanied by a suitable registered supervisor while on school property.

In consultation with Heads of Section the Principal will ensure that appropriate guidance will be provided to school staff at least annually about:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse, including risks related to the actions of students 18 years or over in communication with students of less than 16 years;
- response to and management of risks related to abuse by one student of another;
- review of potential risk for child abuse in the school environment;
- the school's current child safety standards and Code of Conduct for staff, volunteers and others interacting with children to which all staff, contractors and volunteers must adhere.

Appropriate measures will be employed by the Principal to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the risk controls employed by the school, including an annual review of Child Safe Standards.

A student safety officer will be appointed to each Section and Department of the school, Reporting to the Head of Section or Department. The student safety officer will work to embed a culture of child safety in the school by working across operations, curriculum and communications. Their role will include the following activities:

- Champion the role of child safety by regular agenda items related to child safety at staff meetings
- Highlight the significance of child safety by regular communication with parents in newsletters and other publications
- Engage with students to ensure discussion of child safety is couched in appropriate language and can be owned by the student body
- Review child safety and situations where it is compromised in the Section in conjunction with Occupational Health and Safety personnel and assist the Head of Section to complete the annual Child Safety Risk audit

Information concerning child will comprise part of the curriculum and will be provided explicitly and routinely to students in a readily accessible, age-appropriate and user-friendly form.

DEFINITIONS

1. school staff means:

in a non-Government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:

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

2. child means a child enrolled as a student at the school

3. 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

4. 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.

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

Ref: Ministerial Order No 870 - Child Safety Standards- Managing the risk of child abuse in schools.

Related Policies

- Code of Conduct for staff, volunteers and others interacting with students
- Complaints and Appeals Policy for Students
- Policy for Protection of Children and Managing the Risk of Child Abuse
- Privacy Policy
- Social Media Policy

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