

# CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFETY POLICY

Loreto College Ballarat has developed the following Child Protection and Safety Policy. This Policy is an overarching document that provides key elements of our approach to protecting children from abuse.

The policy forms the foundation of the College's procedures, practices, decision-making processes and ultimately the College's culture with respect to child safety.

It is designed to be published on our public website as well as communicated through other Mediums such as newsletters, our annual report and in induction and welcome packs for College Board, staff and Volunteers.

## Objectives

This policy provides the framework for:

- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child protection within the College;
- the creation of a positive and robust child protection culture;
- the promotion and open discussion of child protection issues within the College; and
- Compliance with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection in Victoria.

## Our Child Protection and Safety Policy

### Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Child abuse includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect and a child's exposure to family violence. Loreto College Ballarat is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse and demonstrates this commitment through the implementation of a comprehensive Child Protection Program designed to keep children safe.

At Loreto College Ballarat we have a zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The College regards its child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture.

### Child Safe Values & Principles

The College's commitment to child safety is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse.

- All children have the right to be safe.
- The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
- The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected.
- Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Safety Code of Conduct and Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy.
- The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.
- Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our College community.
- Procedures are in place to screen all staff, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers who have direct contact with children.
- Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
- Child protection training is mandatory for all College Board and staff.
- Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the College community.
- Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

### Child Protection Program

Loreto College Ballarat is committed to the effective implementation of our Child Protection Program and ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated. We adopt a risk management approach by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety risks based on a range of factors including the nature of our College's activities, physical and online environments and the characteristics of the student body.

Our Child Protection Program relates to all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse. It includes:

- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and associated key risk indicators;
- clear procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse;
- strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, Volunteers, Third Party contractors, External Education Providers, parents and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child protection matters;
- procedures for recruiting and screening College Board Directors, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers; pastoral care strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe;
- Policies with respect to cultural diversity and students with disabilities; a child protection training program;
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children; guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality;
- Policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Victorian Child Safe Standards); and a system for continuous review and improvement.

As a part of Loreto College Ballarat's induction process, all staff, College Board and Directors are required to complete a selection of training modules on the content of our Child Protection Program.

All staff and College Board Directors are provided with additional, ongoing child protection training at least annually.

Staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers are supported and supervised by the College's Executive Deputy Principal to ensure that they are compliant with the College's approach to child protection.

## Responsibilities

Child protection is everyone's responsibility. At Loreto College Ballarat all Directors of the College Board and staff, as well as Volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. Specific responsibilities include:

### College Board

Each Director of the College Board is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the College's Child Protection and Safety Policy and the Child Protection Program to be effectively implemented within the College and are responsible for holding the Principal and Leadership team accountable for effective implementation.

### The Principal

The Principal is responsible, and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Protection and Safety Policy and the College's Child Protection Program are implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child protection culture is maintained within the College.

### The Child Protection Officers

A number of senior staff members are nominated as the College's Child Safety Officers. Our Child Safety Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child protection issues. They are the first point of contact for raising child protection concerns within the College. They are also responsible for championing child protection within the College and assisting in coordinating responses to child protection incidents.

### Staff Members

All staff are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the College's Child Safety Officers.

### Indirect Contact Volunteers

Indirect Contact Volunteers (or 'Indirect Volunteers') are those volunteers who

are involved in providing support and services whilst not directly assisting a specific group of students. Indirect Volunteers are not responsible for supervising students and would not have "unsupervised" contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service.

All Indirect Volunteers are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

All Indirect Volunteers are required by the College to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Safety Code of Conduct. Examples of Indirect Contact Volunteer activities may include assisting with College functions, or the College canteen and fundraising barbecues.

### Third Party Contractors

All Third Party Contractors (service providers) engaged by the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment. Third Party Contractors include, for example, maintenance and building personnel, consultants, casual teachers, tutors, sports coaches and college cleaners.

This also includes music teachers and other extra-curricular teachers and instructors who are engaged by students and their families directly, rather than the College, but have an agreement with the College to use the College's facilities.

### Direct Contact Contractors

Direct Contact Contractors are:

- those who have direct unsupervised contact with students during the normal course of their work;
- those who may be in a position to establish a relationship of trust with a student notwithstanding that unsupervised access to students would be rare (for example full-time maintenance personnel); and
- any contractors whom a school is legally required to screen.

### Indirect Contact Contractors

Indirect Contact Contractors are those contractors who do not meet the definition of "Direct Contact Contractor". Refer to **Third Party Contractors' Responsibilities** for more information.

All service providers engaged by the College are required by the College to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program. The College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the service provider.

### External Education Providers

An External Education Provider is any organisation that the College has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the College.

The delivery of such a course may take place on College premises or elsewhere.

All External Education Provider engaged by the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

All External Education Provider engaged by the College are required by the College to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program. Loreto College Ballarat may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the External Education Provider.

## Reporting Child Protection Concerns

Our Child Protection Program provides detailed guidance for College Board members and staff as to how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to one of our College's nominated Child Safety Officers. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.

Staff, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, Volunteers, students, parents/guardians and other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse or grooming are asked to contact the College's Senior Child Safety Officer, Elizabeth Till by phoning **03 5329 6100** or emailing **executivedeputyprincipal@loreto.vic.edu.au**.

Communications will be treated confidentially on a "need to know basis".

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.

## Related Policies and Procedures

- Risk Management Program Compliance Program Human Resources Program
- Student Duty of Care Program Occupational Health & Safety Program Child Protection Staff Training Recruitment & Selection Procedures
- Induction Procedures
- Policy & Program Review

Loreto College Ballarat is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Protection Program. The Program is regularly reviewed for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child protection related laws, regulations and standards.

## Child Safety Code of Conduct

A Child Safety Code of Conduct lists behaviours that are acceptable and those that are unacceptable. It provides a high-level statement of professional boundaries, ethical behaviour and acceptable and unacceptable relationships. For more detailed guidance refer to the College's Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy.

When individuals are clear about behavioural expectations, they are much more likely to act appropriately with each other and with children. When everyone is educated about the Code of Conduct and the reasons it is so important to uphold, the College environment becomes much more transparent and people

are accountable for their behaviour. Above all, a Child Safety Code of Conduct helps to protect children from harm.

The Child Protection Code of Conduct applies to:

- all staff members, including non-teaching staff and temporary or casual staff;
- Volunteers;
- students;
- parents and carers;
- Third Party Contractors and service providers (including External Education Providers);
- directors of the College Board;
- teaching students on placement at the College; and
- visitors.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct set out below is designed to stand alone. It can also be incorporated in whole or part into broader Codes of Conduct that are developed within the College, including other professional or occupational codes of conduct that regulate particular staff at the College.

The Code is made available to all staff, Volunteers, families and students via our public website and staff intranet. A PDF version of our Child Safety Code of Conduct is available here.

### Our Child Safety Code of Conduct

This Child Safety Code of Conduct outlines appropriate standards of behaviour for all adults towards students. The Code serves to protect students, reduce any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur, and promote child safety in the College environment. It provides guidance on how to best support students and how to avoid or better manage difficult situations. Where a staff member breaches the Code, Loreto College Ballarat may take disciplinary action, including in the case of serious breaches, summary dismissal. The College revises the Code annually.

Loreto College Ballarat has the following expectations of behaviours and boundaries for all adults interacting with students within our College community. This includes all teaching staff, non-teaching staff, Board directors, third party contractors, external education providers and parents/carers.

The College's College Board has endorsed this Child Safety Code of Conduct.

#### DO:

- Behave as a positive role model to students.
- Promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of students.
- Be vigilant and proactive with regard to student safety and child protection issues.
- Provide age appropriate supervision for students.
- Comply with guidelines published by the College with respect to child protection.
- Treat all students with respect.
- Promote the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability.

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of linguistically and culturally diverse students.
- Use positive and affirming language towards students.
- Encourage students to 'have a say' and then listen to them with respect.
- Respect cultural, religious and political differences.
- Help provide an open, safe and supportive environment for all students to interact, and socialise.
- Intervene when students are engaging in inappropriate bullying behaviour towards others or acting in a humiliating or vilifying way.
- Report any breaches of this Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- Report concerns about child safety to one of the College's Child Safety Officers and ensure that your legal obligations to report allegations externally are met.
- Where an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the student involved is safe.
- Call the Police on 000 if you have immediate concerns for a student's safety.
- Respect the privacy of students and their families and only disclose information to people who have a need to know.

#### **DO NOT:**

- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.
- Engage in any form of inappropriate behaviour towards students or expose students to such behaviour.
- Use prejudice, oppressive behaviour or inappropriate language with students.
- Express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of students or discriminate against any student based on culture, race, ethnicity or disability.
- Engage in open discussions of an adult nature in the presence of students.
- Engage in any form of sexual conduct with a student including making sexually suggestive comments and sharing sexually suggestive material.
- Engage in inappropriate or unnecessary physical conduct or behaviours including doing things of a personal nature that a student can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes.
- Engage in any form of physical violence towards a student including inappropriately rough physical play.
- Use physical means or corporal punishment to discipline or control a student.
- Engage in any form of behaviour that has the potential to cause a student serious emotional or psychological harm.
- Develop 'special' relationships with students that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific students).
- Engage in undisclosed private meetings with a student that is not your own child.
- Engage in meetings with a child that is not your own, outside of school hours and without permission from the College and the child's parent.
- Engage in inappropriate personal communications with a student through

- any medium, including any online contact or interactions with a student.
- Take or publish (including online) photos, movies or recordings of a student without parental/carer consent.
  - Post online any information about a student that may identify them such as their: full name; age; e-mail address; telephone number; residence; school; or details of a club or group they may attend.

Our Child Protection Program includes a **Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy** that provides detailed guidance for all staff and Volunteers on how to maintain professional boundaries between students and adults at Loreto College Ballarat.

### Report any concerns

The Program also includes information for directors of the College Board and staff as to how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to one of our College's nominated Child Safety Officers.

It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.

Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, Indirect Contact Volunteers, students, parents or other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse are asked to contact the Executive Deputy Principal and/or one of the College's **Child Safety Officers**.