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# Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (Child Friendly Version)

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# Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (Child Friendly Version)

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## Purpose

The purpose of our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy – Student Version (**Policy**) is to demonstrate the College's strong commitment to the care, safety and wellbeing of all students and children at the College and how we will create and maintain a child safe and child-friendly environment, where children are safe and feel safe, are cared for and nurtured.

This Policy provides our students with access to child safety information and information about our reporting processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.

## Our Commitments

The College is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children and their families. All children who come to the College have a right to feel and be safe. We are committed to providing environments where children are safe and feel safe, are protected from abuse and all other forms of harm, and 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.

Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students, with particular attention given to the child safety needs. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour is not tolerated at our College, and any instances identified or reported will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

We have a zero tolerance for child abuse and other harm and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm

to students in our College environments. We are committed to acting in students' best interests and keeping them safe from harm. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly. We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of students who may be experiencing risk or vulnerability due to their diverse backgrounds or personal circumstances. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour is not tolerated at our College, and any instances identified or reported will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our College 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 to inform our ongoing strategies.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Expectations of our College Staff

All Staff are required to comply with this Policy, the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Child Safety Codes of Conduct, be familiar with our Child Safe Program and understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse and other harm, and Working with Children clearances.

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All Staff must:

- ▶ advocate and promote child rights, empowering and engaging children in support of this Policy;
- ▶ maintain a full understanding of the commitments and expectations of this Policy, as well as the individual responsibilities in relation to child safety, and the wellbeing of children, including ways to prevent, identify and mitigate risks relating to child safety and wellbeing;
- ▶ participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and ongoing training provided or arranged by the College;
- ▶ always follow the College's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures in the Child Safe Program;
- ▶ ensure compliance with this Policy, fully implementing and adhering to the commitments and expectations;
- ▶ act in accordance with the Child Safety Codes of Conduct and adopt appropriate safeguarding practice and behaviour;
- ▶ identify and raise child safety incidents and concerns in accordance with our Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns, and follow [the PROTECT Four Critical Actions](#) and [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#); and Mandatory Reporting.
- ▶ ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard when making decisions that affect them;
- ▶ take action to protect children from all forms of abuse and all other forms of harm;
- ▶ assist in creating and maintaining a child safe culture and a culture of inclusion and safety;
- ▶ support a culture of openness, continued improvement and accountability to children by engaging in regular review and discussion of College policies and practices and providing feedback to support improvement;
- ▶ seek guidance from a supervisor or manager if there is ever any lack of understanding in relation to the commitments and expectations as set out in this Policy.

### **Expectations of other members of our College community**

The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy lists detailed expectations of other members of our College community.

Persons who are volunteers at the College or who are engaged to perform work for the College but they are not staff members (called contractors) also have expectations placed on them to comply with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct, particularly in training on child safety matters, being able to recognise abuse and other harm to children and also to have all relevant clearances to be able to be around children.

Our College Board members and our College leaders also have significant expectations in relation to child safety prescribed by the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. These persons are expected to be champions of child safe and positive culture in our College where

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there is no tolerance for child abuse and any other harm. Our leaders must advocate and promote child rights, empowering and engaging students in support of the Child Safe and Wellbeing Policy, and they are accountable for ongoing monitoring of compliance, risk management and continued improvement.

### Child Safe Principles

The College has developed specific child safe principles and values relevant to its own specific circumstances that guide our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect students from abuse and harm.

Our Child Safe Principles are:

- ▶ 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 Employee Code of Conduct, the Child Safety Code of Conduct and related policies and procedures.
- ▶ 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 applicants for jobs and volunteers to ensure only suitable people work with children.
- ▶ Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.

- ▶ Child protection training is mandatory for all College Board members, staff and relevant volunteers and contractors.
- ▶ 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, who are vulnerable or have diverse circumstances have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal.
- ▶ Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

### Child Safety Code of Conduct

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct and our Employee Code of Conduct set out boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults in our College community and students, including in physical, online and virtual environments.

We also have a Student Code of Conduct which includes standards of behaviour for students.

We publish our Child Safety Codes of Conduct on our public website so that everyone can easily find out what behaviours are acceptable and unacceptable at our College and how to report inappropriate behaviour.

We also provide additional information to students and families about the Child Safety Code of Conduct, to ensure that they know what behaviours are acceptable and unacceptable and how to report inappropriate behaviour.

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## Risk management

At the College we are committed to proactively and systematically identifying and assessing risks to student safety across our whole College environment and reducing or eliminating (where possible) all potential sources of harm. We document, implement, monitor and periodically review our risk management strategies for child safety and ensure that the strategies change as needed and as new risks arise.

## Establishing a culturally safe environment

The College is committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe College where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal students, we recognise the link between culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students, their families and their communities (including local Aboriginal communities relevant to the College) to have a voice and presence in our College's planning, policies, and activities.

## Student Empowerment and Participation

The College is a child safe and child-centred organisation, and we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our approach to child safety and wellbeing and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

We ensure that our physical, virtual and online environments are friendly and

welcoming to all children and young people.

We actively seek to include students in decisions that affect them. This includes decisions about organisational planning, delivery of services, management of facilities, and learning and assessment environments.

We ensure that students know about their rights to safety, information and participation. We actively seek to understand what makes students feel safe in our College and regularly communicate with students about what they can do if they feel unsafe.

We recognise the importance of friendships and encourage respectful relationships, strong friendships and support from peers to ensure a sense of belonging.

We inform students of their rights through this policy as well as the Primary Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and the Secondary Behaviour and Wellbeing Policy 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.

Other specific strategies that we have adopted to promote the participation of and empowerment of students, and to implement all of the above obligations, are as follows:

- ▶ the Be You framework, through implementing Program Achieve (You Can Do It – Social and Emotional Learning), 'Circle Time' activities and the restorative program in primary school. These programs

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provide students with opportunities to raise issues of concern, to build positive social skills and to reflect on the school values;

- ▶ the Personal & Social Development Program offered in secondary school. This program provides students with opportunities to raise issues of concern, to build positive social skills and reflect on the school values; and
- ▶ Students can apply for Leadership roles in the school environment that include Student Representative Council, School Captain and Vice Captain.

### Parent/Carer, Family and Community Engagement

We ensure that families and the communities that make up our staff and student cohort and the local community in which our College operates know about the College's operations and policies, including its Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and the Child Safety Code of Conduct, record keeping practices, risk management, and complaints and investigation processes. We build cultural safety at the College through partnerships with relevant communities.

We actively seek to include families and relevant communities in decisions about organisational planning, delivery of services, management of facilities, and learning and assessment environments.

### Diversity and Equity

We will ensure that all persons within our College uphold equity and respect diversity by:

- ▶ ensuring that the College, including its staff and volunteers, understand

our student's diverse circumstances and provide support and respond to those with vulnerabilities;

- ▶ informing students of their rights and giving all students access to information, support and complaints processes;
- ▶ respecting the rights of students to participate in decision-making, and paying particular attention to the needs of students who may be experiencing risk or vulnerability due to their diverse backgrounds or personal circumstances.

### Suitable Staff, Volunteers and Contractors

At the College, 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.

### Child Safety Knowledge, Skills and Awareness

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

In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our staff will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Our College Board must also undertake annual child safety and wellbeing training.

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## Reporting

The College fosters a culture that encourages everyone in the College community to raise concerns and complaints about child safety and wellbeing. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and for misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

The College will provide students with information about and encourage them to use multiple pathways to raise child safety incidents or concerns about or at the College, including breaches of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct.

## How to report concerns

If you have been abused or feel unsafe you can tell a teacher or any adult at our College. All College staff members have a responsibility to protect any child under their care. They will be able to help you.

If you think someone has been abused or is unsafe you should talk to an adult you trust. Any staff member at our College will be able to help. Help your friend by encouraging them to tell a trusted adult. Even if your friend has specifically asked you not to tell an adult, you still should. It is more important to make sure that your friend is helped and feels protected.

The College records any child safety complaints. All College staff members have a responsibility to protect any child under their care. You will be helped.

The adult will listen to your concerns and help you.

In some cases the people helping you are required by law to tell the police, the Department of Health and Human Services' Child Protection services

and/or your family to prevent any further abuse, or risk of abuse.

When the College is gathering information in relation to your complaint about alleged misconduct or abuse, we will listen to your account and take you seriously, check our understanding of the complaint, support you and keep you (and your parents and carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

The Campus Principals are appointed as Child Safe Officers. Students can report concerns directly to them. They also provide advice to staff in the area of child safety. Our Child Safe Officers are a first point of contact for raising child safety concerns within the College.

Our Child Safe Officers and their contact details are listed on our website at [www.ilimcollege.vic.edu.au](http://www.ilimcollege.vic.edu.au).

Parents/carers, family members and other community members who have child safety concerns or who suspect that a child associated with the College may be subject to abuse or other harm can contact a Child Safe Officer.

Where the incident or concerns involves a Child Safe Officer/Campus Principal or the Executive Principal or a College Board member, internal reports should be made to the Senior Child Safe Officer/Chief Executive Officer. Where the incident or concerns involves the Senior Child Safe Officer/Chief Executive Officer, internal reports should be made to the Chair of the College Board.