

# CHILD SAFETY POLICY & STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

## PREAMBLE

Mount Ridley P-12 College is committed to providing a safe environment for all students and young people and takes active steps to protect them against abuse. To achieve this the College has developed and actively enforces child safety strategies to ensure that any person involved in 'child-connected work' is aware of their obligations and responsibilities for ensuring the safety of all children under their care.

## RATIONALE

In accordance with the requirements of the Victorian Government's Ministerial Order 870, Mount Ridley P-12 College maintains a 'zero tolerance' to child abuse and has established a suite of policies, procedures and practices in response to the Order's minimum Child Safety Standards.

"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". **Ministerial Order 870**

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate Mount Ridley P-12 College's commitment to ensuring child safety and to illustrate the measures the College has taken to maintain a safe education environment, as well as processes for responding to suspected abuse.

This policy applies to all College staff, students, parents/carers, volunteers, students on placement, visitors, contractors and College community members, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people. It also applies to all individuals engaged in any College and College council-run events, activities and services such as before and after school care programs and cultural and sporting events.

## STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Mount Ridley P-12 College is firmly committed to the care, wellbeing and protection of its students. It recognises that through its policies, procedures and practices, the fundamental rights of all children and young people are respected, nurtured and safeguarded from any form of harm.

To maintain the highest standards, the College has established processes to ensure its policies, procedures and practices are aligned with the relevant legislative and Ministerial requirements; regularly monitored; and cyclically reviewed to maintain compliance with legislative and Ministerial requirements.

Through its policies, procedures and practices, the College will support, encourage and enable staff, students, parents/carers, volunteers, visitors, contractors and other College community members to understand, identify, discuss and report any matters that relate to child safety.

In maintaining a child-safe environment, the College will work in partnership with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA), the Department of Education and Training (DET), and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to improve child protection and promote and implement the Victorian compulsory Child Safe Standards and other associated legislative obligations emanating from recommendations associated with the:

- Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse; and the
- Victorian Parliamentary inquiry into the handlings of child abuse by religious and other organisations which culminated in the Betrayal of Trust report.

## IMPLEMENTATION

All children and young people have the right to feel safe and protected. At Mount Ridley P-12 College we also recognise the diversity of our children and young people and take account of their individual needs and backgrounds when considering child safety.

Mount Ridley P-12 College understands the important role it plays in protecting children from abuse including:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse (including sexual exploitation)
- Family violence
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect (including medical neglect)
- Grooming

The **Child Safe Policy** underpins all the College's child safety decision-making.

Child safety decision-making at the College is informed by the **Seven Child Safety Standards (Ministerial Order 870)**.

**Standard 1:** Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements.

**Standard 2:** A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety.

**Standard 3:** A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.

**Standard 4:** Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel.

**Standard 5:** Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.

**Standard 6:** Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse.

**Standard 7:** Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

### *Risk Management*

Mount Ridley P-12 College recognises the importance of minimising the potential of child abuse or harm and manages risks of abuse through a range of strategies including:

- The Child Safety Code of Conduct which defines workplace expectations including professional boundaries, ethical behaviours and acceptable and unacceptable relationships.
- Processes for the recruitment, induction, support, ongoing training and supervision of staff, casual relief teachers, volunteers, students on placement and contractors who participate in 'child-connected work'.
- Procedures for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.
- A commitment that promotes the safety of Indigenous children, children with disabilities and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- ICT acceptable use agreements for students.
- Yard supervision and out of bounds areas in the school to ensure students are not placed at risk.
- Student Engagement, Social Media and Workplace Bullying Policies to maintain a child safe environment for all students.

### *Child Safety Code of Conduct*

Mount Ridley P-12 College's Child Safety Code of Conduct provides staff, casual relief teachers, students on placement, volunteers and contractors with clear professional expectations including professional boundaries, ethical behaviour and acceptable and unacceptable relationships.

### *Recruitment, Support, Training and Supervision*

Mount Ridley P-12 College adopts administrative and human resource practices to ensure its screening, recruitment and performance management processes identify and engage the most suitable candidates. Recruitment and screening processes, as well as police checks and Working with Children checks are minimum requirements for people engaged in 'child-connected work'. All teaching staff are registered through the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

### *Responding to and reporting child safety concerns or abuse*

The Principal Class and Leadership team work closely to ensure child safety standards are maintained and all child safety complaints, suspected abuse, disclosures or breaches of the College's Child Safety Code of Conduct are addressed immediately. The College's Child Safety / Mandatory Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, provides school staff, volunteers, contractors and others engaged in the College community with child safety reporting obligations and procedures to follow should they need to respond to child safety allegations or concerns.

### *Child Safety Officer*

The College Principal is the College's Child Safety Officer and is responsible for all matters pertaining to child safety and maintaining a child safe environment.

The broad areas of the role are to:

1. Provide authoritative advice
  - Act as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of child safety.
  - Liaise with the Principal Class team and school leaders to maintain the visibility of child safety.

- Lead the development of the College's child safety culture, including being a child safety champion and providing coordination in communicating, implementing, monitoring, enhancing and reporting on strategies to embed a culture of child safety.

## 2. Raise awareness

- Ensure the College's policies are known and used appropriately.
- Ensure the College's child safety policy is reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework.
- Ensure the child protection policy is available publicly and parents are aware of the fact that referrals in relation to suspected abuse or neglect may be made, along with the role of the College in ensuring the safety of children.
- Be alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers.
- Encourage among all staff a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings in any measures to protect them.

## 3. Train

Being authoritative in providing advice by:

- Keeping their skills up-to-date with appropriate training.
- Having a working knowledge of how the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Community Service Organisations conduct a child protection case conference to be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so.

## EVALUATION

As part of the College review cycle this policy will be reviewed every two years unless it needs to be reviewed earlier as a result of audit, legislative or Ministerial requirements.

Date policy ratified: February 19, 2019.

## References

- Mount Ridley P-12 College – Child Safety and Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedures, Student Engagement Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Social Media Policy, Healthy Relationships Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Ministerial Order No. 870- Child Safe Standards -Managing the risk of child abuse in schools
- DET School Policy - Child Protection - Reporting Obligations
- DET School policy - Responding to Student Sexual Offending