

## Child Safety Policy

Reviewed School Council: Sept 2018

Next Review: Sept 2019

Responsibility: School Principal

**NOTE:** The requirements set out in the Department's *School Policy and Advisory Guide* apply at all times

At Portland Bay School we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of our school. Our commitment is drawn from our school philosophy, mission and values.

### Philosophical Statement

The Portland Bay School believes education should help students lead happy and fulfilling lives as good community citizens.

### Mission Statement

The Portland Bay School's mission is to deliver students high quality individual education that prepares students to achieve their maximum potential.

### School Values

**Be respectful**  
**Be responsible**  
**Be resilient**

## 1. Purpose of this Policy

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the strong commitment of Portland Bay School to the care, safety and wellbeing of all our students. It provides an outline of the policies, procedures and strategies developed to keep students safe from harm, including all forms of abuse at school, online and in other locations provided by the school.

This policy takes into account relevant legislative requirements within the state of Victoria, including the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in Ministerial Order No. 870.

This policy applies to all school staff, including employees, volunteers, contractors and visitors.

## 2. Principles

**The following principles underpin our commitment to child safety at Portland Bay School:**

- All students deserve safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect
- Our school works in partnership with families and the community to ensure child safety and protection
- All students have the right to a thorough and systematic education in all aspects of personal safety, in partnership with their parents/guardians/caregivers
- All adults in our school have a responsibility to care for children and young people, to positively promote their wellbeing and to protect them from any kind of harm or abuse
- The policies, guidelines and codes of conduct for the care, wellbeing and protection of students are based on honest, respectful and trusting relationships between adults and students
- These policies and practices demonstrate compliance with legislative requirements and cooperation with governments, the police and human services agencies
- All persons involved in situations where harm is suspected or disclosed must be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect
- Staff, volunteers, visitors, contractors, parents/guardians and students should feel free to raise concerns about child safety, knowing these will be taken seriously by school leadership

- Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained at all times, notwithstanding, information being provided to those who have a right or a need to be informed, either legally or pastorally

### 3. Policy Commitments

All students enrolled at Portland Bay School have the right to feel and be safe. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we will not tolerate child abuse. We aim to create a child-safe and child-friendly environment where children are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety. There is particular attention paid to the most vulnerable children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with a disability.

#### **Our commitment to our students:**

- (a) We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people enrolled in our school
- (b) We commit to providing children and young people with positive and nurturing experiences
- (c) We commit to listening to children and young people and empowering them by taking their views seriously, and addressing any concerns that they raise with us
- (d) We commit to taking action to ensure children and young people are protected from abuse or harm
- (e) We commit to teaching children and young people the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing
- (f) We commit to seeking input and feedback from students regarding the creation of a safe school environment

#### **Our commitment to parents and guardians:**

- (a) We commit to communicating honestly and openly with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children
- (b) We commit to engaging with, and listening to, the views of parents and carers about our child-safety practice, policies and procedures
- (c) We commit to transparency in our decision-making with parents and carers where it will not compromise the safety of children or young people
- (d) We commit to acknowledging the cultural diversity of students and families, and being sensitive to how this may impact on student safety issues
- (e) We commit to continuously reviewing and improving our systems to protect children from abuse

#### **Our commitment to our school staff (employees, volunteers and contractors):**

- (a) We commit to providing all Portland Bay School staff with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles
- (b) We commit to providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm policy and procedures in relation to child safety and young people's protection and wellbeing. This will include annual training in the principles and intent of the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct, and staff responsibilities to report concerns
- (c) We commit to listening to all concerns voiced by Portland Bay School staff about keeping children and young people safe from harm
- (d) We commit to providing opportunities for Portland Bay School employees, volunteers and contractors to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person as needed

### 4. Responsibilities and Expectations

Everyone employed or volunteering at Portland Bay School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure the wellbeing and safety of all students.

At Portland Bay School we expect employees, volunteers, visitors and contractors to proactively ensure the safety of students at all times and to take appropriate action if there are concerns about the safety of any child at the school. All school staff must remain familiar with the relevant laws, the code of conduct, and policies and procedures in relation to child protection and to comply with all requirements.

Portland Bay School has a Child Safety Code of Conduct for all adults, which recognises the critical role that school staff play in protecting students in our care and establishes clear expectations of school employees, volunteers, visitors and contractors for appropriate behaviour with children in order to safeguard them against abuse and or neglect. Our Code also protects school staff through clarification of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

The school has allocated roles and responsibilities for child safety as follows:

#### 4.1 Guide to Responsibilities of School Leadership

The principal, the school governing authority and school leaders at Portland Bay School recognise their particular responsibility to ensure the development of preventative and proactive strategies that promote a culture of openness, awareness of and shared responsibility for child safety.

Responsibilities include:

- creating an environment for children and young people to be safe and to feel safe
- upholding high principles and standards for all staff, volunteers, contractors and visitors
- promoting models of behaviour between adults and children and young people based on mutual respect and consideration
- ensuring thorough and rigorous practices are applied in the recruitment, screening and ongoing professional learning of staff
- ensuring that school personnel have regular and appropriate learning to address child safety matters
- providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm legislative obligations, policy and procedures in relation to children and young peoples' protection and wellbeing
- ensuring the school meets the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in [Ministerial Order No. 870](#)

#### 4.2 Guide to Responsibilities of School Staff (employees, volunteers and contractors)

Responsibilities include:

- treating children and young people with dignity and respect, acting with propriety, providing a duty of care, and protecting children and young people in their care
- following the legislative and internal school processes in the course of their work, if they form a reasonable belief that a child or young person has been or is being abused or neglected
- providing a physically and psychologically safe environment where the wellbeing of children and young people is nurtured
- undertaking regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to child safety and the wellbeing of children and young people
- assisting children and young people to develop positive, responsible and caring attitudes and behaviours which recognise the rights of all people to be safe and free from abuse
- following the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct

## 5. Student Participation in Child Safety

At Portland Bay School, we actively encourage all students to openly express their views and feel comfortable about giving voice to the things that are important to them. We teach students about what they can do if they feel unsafe and enable them to understand, identify, discuss and report on child safety. We listen to and act on any concerns students, or their parents or carers, raise with us.

## 6. Reporting and Responding

Our school records any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and stores the records in accordance with security and privacy requirements. Our school complies with legal obligations that relate to managing the risk of child abuse under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.), the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.) and the recommendations of the [Betrayal of Trust](#) report.

Child protection reporting obligations fall under separate pieces of legislation with differing reporting requirements.

Our school's **Child Protection Reporting Policy**, updated annually, sets out the actions required under the relevant legislation when there is a reasonable belief that a child at our school is in need of protection or a criminal offence has been committed, and provides guidance and procedures on how to make a report.

Our policy assists staff, volunteers and families to:

- identify the indicators of a child or young person who may be in need of protection
- understand how a 'reasonable belief' is formed
- make a report of a child or young person who may be in need of protection
- comply with mandatory reporting obligations under child protection law and their legal obligations relating to criminal child abuse and grooming under criminal law

Our school has also established internal processes to ensure that appropriate action is taken to respond to concerns about the wellbeing and/or safety of a student.

## 7. Screening and Recruitment of Staff

When recruiting and selecting employees, contractors, visitors and volunteers involved in child-connected work, we:

- confirm the applicant's Working with Children Check and National Police Check status and/or professional registration (as relevant)
- obtain proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications
- verify the applicant's history of work involving children
- obtain references that address the applicant's suitability for the job and working with children

We have processes for monitoring and assessing the continuing suitability of school staff to work with children, including regular reviews of the status of Working with Children Checks and staff professional registration requirements such as Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration.

## 8. Risk Management

At Portland Bay School we are committed to proactively and systematically identifying and assessing risks to student safety across our whole school 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.

## 9. Relevant Legislation

- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic)
- *Working with Children Act 2005* (Vic)
- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)
- *Privacy Act 1988* (Cwth)
- *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic)

Three new criminal offences have been introduced under this Act:

- a) **Failure to disclose offence**: Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 has an obligation to report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence.
- b) **Failure to protect offence**: This offence will apply when a child under the age of 16 under and under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation becomes a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation. A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- i) **Grooming offence**: This offence targets predatory conduct designed to facilitate later sexual activity with a child. Grooming can be conducted in person or online, for example via interaction through social media, web forums and emails.

## 10. Department of Education Policies (see School Policy and Advisory Guide on DET website)

- Child Safe Standards
- Ministerial Order 199
- Child Protection: Reporting Obligations

## 11. School Policies

[Insert titles to related school policies]

- Child Protection Reporting Policy
- ICT Policy
- Responsible Use of Social Media Policy
- Student Supervision Policy
- Volunteer's Policy
- Grievance and Complaints Procedures
- Student Engagement and Well-being Policy

## 12. Breach of Policy

Where an **employee** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this Policy, Portland Bay School may start the process under Complaints, Misconduct and Unsatisfactory Performance guidelines for managing employment concerns. This may result in disciplinary consequences.

Where the **principal** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the concerned party is advised to contact the Regional Director. Relevant notification should also be made to the Department of Education and Training.

Where any **other member of the school community** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the school is to take appropriate action, including in accordance with established policies and procedures, and/or contact Department of Education (Conduct and Ethics Branch and Legal Branch) and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

## 13. Review of Policy

At Portland Bay School we are committed to continuous improvement of our child safety systems and practices. We intend this policy to be a dynamic document that will be regularly reviewed to ensure it is working in practice and updated to accommodate changes in legislation or circumstance.

We will maintain a history of updates to the policy.

**History of Updates to Policy**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Comment</b>
13/7/16	Working draft of the new policy
9/8/16	School Council approval
14/8/17	Updated policy – working draft to be approved 12/9/17 by Sch Council
12/9/17	School Council approval
8/18	Review policy with DET, school council and staff
9/18	School Council approval