



Child Safe Policy

1. Purpose

This policy sets out the key elements of Cornish College’s approach to ensuring child safety and seeks to provide an overarching set of principles that guide the development of College policies and procedures that aim to protect children from abuse.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all members of the Cornish College community.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone Police on 000.

3. Key Responsibilities

Position/Roles	Responsibilities
Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To review and approve the <i>Child Safe Policy</i> Ensure a culture of child safety is embedded into all aspects of the College
Principal and Executive Leadership Team (ELT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure the <i>Child Safe Policy</i> and Child Safety Program is developed, maintained and effectively implemented Ensure a strong and sustainable child safety culture is maintained within the College Allocate roles and responsibilities for child safety within the College (such as Child Safety Officers)
Child Safety Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be a clearly identifiable “go-to” person for the College community in the event of suspected child safety issue Provide authoritative advice and raise awareness about child safety within the community
All staff, contractors and volunteers (workers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are required to comply with this <i>Child Safe Policy</i>, our <i>Code of Conduct</i> and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse; and Be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse and raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse

4. Key Elements Of The Policy

4.1 Commitment to child safety

Cornish College is committed to child safety.

All children at the College should feel safe, happy and empowered.

Cornish College has a zero tolerance of child abuseⁱ, and all allegations and safety concerns are treated consistently and very seriously. This reflects the legal and moral obligation to contact authorities when a concern is raised about a child's safety.

The College is committed to preventing child abuse, identifying risks early and removing or reducing these risks in all school environmentsⁱⁱ (including physical and online environments). Recruitment processes seek to ensure that the most suitable people are selected to work and volunteer with children, and that unsuitable people are screened out. Annual training occurs to inform staff and volunteers of child abuse risks.

All children are supported and respected at Cornish College, as well as our staff and volunteers.

Diversity and tolerance are promoted at Cornish College. People from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular, we:

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally; and
- Support for same sex attracted, intersex, gender diverse students and children from same sex families

Cornish College will ensure compliance with *Ministerial Order 870, Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools* and all other relevant legislation by imbedding all aspects of the legislation into our policies and procedures.

Further, specific policies, procedures and training exists to support our leadership team, staff, contractors and volunteers and to support Cornish College's commitment to child safety.

4.2 Students

This policy is intended to empower children as vital and active participants of Cornish College. Where appropriate, students are involved when decisions are made about matters that directly affect them. Student views are listened to and treated with respect.

Cornish College will support and assist any child who discloses child abuse, or are otherwise linked to child abuse. The College will listen to and consider the opinions of children and draw on such in shaping our child safety policies.

4.3 Staff, contractors and volunteers

This policy, the *Code of Conduct* and *Child Safe Program* guides our staff, contractors and volunteers on how to behave with children in the College community.

All of our staff, contractors and volunteers must agree to abide by our *Code of Conduct* which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

4.4 Training and supervision

Training and education is important to reinforce the understanding that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Cornish College seeks to create a culture where all staff, contractors and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. Staff and volunteers are trained to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

Staff and volunteers are also supported through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees, contractors and volunteers are supervised regularly to ensure they understand the College's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (refer to *Code of Conduct*). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

4.5 Recruitment

All reasonable steps are taken to employ skilled people to work with children. Selection criteria and advertisements are developed to clearly demonstrate the College's commitment to child safety and an awareness of social and legislative responsibilities. The College understands that when recruiting staff contractors and volunteers, ethical as well as legislative obligations exist.

Applications are encouraged from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including contractors and volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check clearance and to provide evidence of this clearance (see [Working with Children Check](#) website).

Reference checks and Police Record Checks are carried out to ensure that the right people are recruited. Police Record Checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. Some records are retained (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected the decision making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

4.6 Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is the College's primary concern. The College also seeks to be fair and just to personnel. The decisions made when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

All allegations of abuse and safety concerns are recorded using the College's incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, updates are provided to children and families on progress and any actions the College takes.

4.7 Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, contractors, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety or the College is required by law to share the information with others. Cornish College has safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Refer to the College *Privacy Policy* for more details.

4.8 Legislative responsibilities

The legal obligation to protect children is everyone's responsibility. Under the *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) incorporating the Crimes Amendment (Sexual Offences) Act 2016* includes:

Failure to disclose: Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.¹

¹ A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed. See [Department of Justice and Regulation website](#)

Failure to protect: People of authority at the College commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.²

Grooming³: Grooming by an adult of a child under 16, as well as grooming by an adult of a person who has the care, supervision or authority of a child aged under 16, are sexual offences under section 49M of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic). They are therefore “child abuse” as defined in Ministerial Order No. 870

Mandatory Reporters: Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must also comply with their obligations under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic).⁴

4.9 Risk Management

In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, Cornish College proactively manages the risk of abuse to our children.

The College has risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments and online environments.

4.10 Reporting allegations, concerns and complaints

Cornish College takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. The College has appointed **Child Safety Officers** who are the first point of call for all students, parents, workers and anyone else in the College community that have a concern that a child in our care may be subject to abuse or grooming. A list of all *Child Safety Officers* is available on the College’s website under the Child Safety page.

If you have concerns that a child in our care is being abused or may be subject to grooming please contact our **Senior Child Safety Officer, the Principal**.

If you believe a child is in immediate danger, phone the Police on 000.

The College works to ensure all children, families, staff, contractors and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour. All adults in

² Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](#)

³ Grooming is defined as behaviours that manipulate and control a child, their family and other support networks, or institutions with the intent of gaining access to the child, obtaining the child’s compliance, maintaining the child’s silence and avoiding discovery of the sexual abuse.

⁴ Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals psychologists, school counsellors persons in a religious ministry and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse. See [how to make a report to child protection](#).

the College community have a shared responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if there is a 'reasonable belief' that an incident took place (refer to the Crimes Act 1958 as amended, Mandatory Reporting Policy).

If an adult has a **reasonable belief**ⁱⁱⁱ that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident.

4.11 Regular Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly and following significant incidents if they occur. Families and children have the opportunity to contribute to the policy. Where possible the College will do its best to work with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

5. Related College Policies And Procedures

- Code of Conduct SWPOL -002
- Mandatory Reporting Policy SWPOL - 070
- Failure to Disclose Policy SWPOL - 071
- Reportable Conduct of Staff, Volunteers and Others SWPOL - 190
- Risk Management Policy & Framework SGPOL - 030
- Privacy Policy POL – 010
- Child Safety Program (on *The Hive*)
- Child Safety Officer (on the College website)

6. Related External Documents

- Ministerial Order 870, Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools
- The Victorian Teaching Profession's Code of Conduct

DEFINITIONS

What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is the mistreatment by an adult of a child or young person that harms or endangers their physical or emotional health or wellbeing.

It includes:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Grooming
- Emotional or psychological harm
- Neglect
- Family violence

Child abuse is defined in section 3 of the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic).

ii **School environment** means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the College Board for use by a child during or outside school hours, including;

- (a) College grounds
- (b) Online school environments (including email and intranet systems, and video conferencing platforms); and
- (c) Other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitations, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, work experience, homestay accommodation, and other events)

iii **A 'reasonable belief'** or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- A child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- Behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- Someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- Observing suspicious behaviour