



CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY



HELP FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact the General Office on 9581 5200 or via email on mentone.girls.sc@education.vic.gov.au.

Purpose

The Mentone Girls' Secondary College Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our school's commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of our school's approach to implementing [Ministerial Order 1359](#) (PDF, 363KB) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

It informs our school community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

Scope

This policy:

- applies to all school staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to school council members where indicated.
- applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided by for a student's use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers
- should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related school policies section below.

Definitions

The following terms in this policy have [specific definitions](#):

- child
- child safety
- child abuse
- child-connected work
- child-related work
- school environment
- school boarding environment
- school staff
- school boarding premises staff
- school governing authority
- school boarding premises governing authority
- student
- volunteer.

Statement of commitment to child safety

Mentone Girls' Secondary College is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families.

We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, 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.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our school environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer, questioning and asexual (LGBTIQ+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability.

Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our school 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, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

Roles and responsibilities

School leadership team

Our school leadership team (comprising the Principal, Assistant Principals, Wellbeing Team, Engagement Team and Curriculum Team) are responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

Principals and assistant principals will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed
- model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students
- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the school community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of, and responding to abuse

- create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

School staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school or the Department of Education, and always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- act in accordance with our [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#).
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Abuse (including grooming) – [Identification and Response Policy and Procedures](#) including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

School council

In performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, school council members will:

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings
- undertake annual training on child safety,
- approve updates to, and act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members
- when hiring school council employees, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe. At our school, school council employment duties are delegated to the principal who is bound by this policy.

Specific staff child safety responsibilities

Mentone Girls' Secondary College has nominated a child safety champion who is the Assistant Principal responsible for Student Wellbeing, Pathways and Inclusion supports to support the principal to implement our child safety policies and practices. In addition to this the Facilities Manager and the eLearning Specialist are responsible for staff and volunteer inductions. The school also produces a Staff Organiser which contains the Child Safety Policies and obligations and this is updated every year.

The responsibilities of the child safety champion are outlined at [Guidance for child safety champions](#).

Our principal and child safety champion are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

- The Assistant Principal responsible for Student Wellbeing, Pathways and Inclusion is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Anyone in our school community should approach the Assistant Principal Student Wellbeing, Pathways and Inclusion if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- The Principal is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available

- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Abuse (including grooming) – Identification and Response Policy and Procedures, and Child Safety Risk Register.

Our school has a Wellbeing Team which meets fortnightly to discuss on child safety. The Wellbeing Team meet regularly to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing. The Student Representative Council (SRC) provides an opportunity for students to provide input into school strategies.

The Principal Team monitors the Child Safety Risk Register on an Annual basis.

Child Safety Code of Conduct

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school.

The [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#) also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing

At our school we identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site overnight camps, adventure activities and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our school leadership team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

Establishing a culturally safe environment

At Mentone Girls' Secondary College we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school 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 Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

We have developed the following strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community:

Mentone Girls' Secondary College is committed to providing a culturally safe environment in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students feel respected, valued, supported and able to participate fully in all aspects of school life.

The school acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which the school stands, the Bunurong People of the Kulin Nation, and recognises their continuing connection to Country, culture and community.

The school recognises that cultural identity is fundamental to a student's sense of belonging, wellbeing and safety.

Mentone Girls' Secondary College actively promotes respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and perspectives through curriculum, school events and community engagement.

The school is committed to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students:

- feel culturally safe at school
- experience high expectations for learning and achievement
- are supported to strengthen their cultural identity
- have opportunities to contribute to decision making that affects them
- have equitable access to educational opportunities and support.

The school values partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and community members and seeks their input into school practices where appropriate.

These commitments are supported through the school's [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan](#) and other inclusion initiatives.

Student empowerment

To support child safety and wellbeing at Mentone Girls' Secondary College we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Mentone Girls' Secondary College is committed to creating a safe, inclusive and supportive environment in which every student feels valued, respected and empowered to participate fully in school life.

We believe that students are active partners in creating and maintaining a child safe culture. Students are encouraged to contribute their ideas, raise concerns and participate in decisions that affect their learning, safety and wellbeing.

Positive and respectful relationships between students are explicitly taught, modelled and reinforced across the school through our values of Inclusivity, Empowerment, Creativity and Achievement.

Students are supported to understand:

- their rights to feel safe, respected and included
- the behaviours they should expect from adults working in the school
- appropriate peer relationships
- how to recognise unsafe or inappropriate behaviour
- who they can talk to if they feel unsafe or are concerned about the safety of another student
- the various ways concerns can be reported.

Students are encouraged to seek support from a trusted adult at any time, including a classroom teacher, Form Group teacher, Assistant Director or Director of Sub-School, Assistant Principal, member of the Wellbeing Team or the Principal.

Student voice is actively encouraged through a range of formal and informal opportunities, including the Student Representative Council, student leadership roles, surveys, consultation processes and regular opportunities for feedback.

When the school responds to concerns or allegations involving child safety, students are listened to respectfully, their views are taken seriously, and they are kept informed throughout the process in a manner that is appropriate to their age, maturity and circumstances.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the school to ensure a sense of belonging. The teaching of Respectful Relationships curriculum is embedded in the Health Curriculum and the student Code of Conduct and our school values are referenced at assemblies, in classes and in our communications with the school community.

We inform students of their rights through displaying of the Protect Poster throughout the school grounds, including it in newsletters, whole school and year level assemblies and through the MGSC Statement of Values. The Respectful Relationships curriculum provides our students with 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. Students and families can also access information on how to report concerns by contacting the school on 9581 5200.

When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct or abuse of a child, we will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously, check our understanding of the complaint, support the student and keep them (and their parents and carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

Family engagement

Our families and the school community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, at Mentone Girls' Secondary College we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

We do this by:

- all of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents on our school website under [policies](#).
- Newsletters or Compass Newsfeeds and emails will inform families and the school community about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school.
- Links to agencies and support organisations such as Orange Door are shared with families prior to the commencement of school holiday breaks.
- Parent information sessions are held throughout the year and publicised through Newsletters and newsfeeds.

Diversity and equity

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

Our [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#) provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

Our school values of Inclusivity, Empowerment, Creativity and Achievement underpin all aspects of school life and guide the way we work with students, families and the wider community.

We recognise that every student brings unique experiences, identities, cultures, strengths and perspectives that enrich our school community. We celebrate diversity and actively promote equity through our curriculum, student leadership opportunities, wellbeing programs and whole-school events.

Throughout the year, Mentone Girls' Secondary College provides opportunities for students and staff to celebrate diversity, develop empathy and strengthen inclusion through a range of significant events and initiatives, including:

- **National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee Week**, recognising and celebrating the histories, cultures and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- **International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia and Transphobia**, promoting inclusion, respect and belonging for students and staff of all sexual orientations and gender identities.
- **R U OK? Day**, encouraging meaningful conversations about mental health, wellbeing and seeking support.
- **Harmony Week**, celebrating Australia's cultural diversity and promoting respect, belonging and social inclusion.
- **International Women's Day**, recognising the achievements of women and encouraging students to become confident leaders and advocates for gender equity.
- **Mental Health Month** and other wellbeing initiatives that encourage students to build resilience, strengthen relationships and seek support when required.
- **student-led awareness activities**, fundraising events and community service initiatives that reflect the interests and values of our students.

These events provide opportunities for students to learn about different cultures, identities and lived experiences while fostering understanding, compassion and respectful relationships.

Mentone Girls' Secondary College does not tolerate discrimination, harassment, bullying, vilification or victimisation in any form. All members of the school community are expected to contribute to a culture of respect and inclusion.

Consideration is given to ensuring culturally safe, inclusive and responsive practices for:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- international students
- students with disability
- students in Out of Home Care
- students experiencing family violence or other vulnerabilities
- students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse, intersex, queer, questioning or asexual

The school works collaboratively with students, families, external agencies and the Department of Education to provide appropriate adjustments, targeted supports and inclusive learning opportunities that enable every student to participate fully in school life.

These commitments are supported through the school's Inclusion and Diversity Policy, Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy, Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan which are located on our school [website](#).

Suitable staff and volunteers

At Mentone Girls' Secondary 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.

Staff recruitment

When recruiting staff, we follow the Department of Education's recruitment policies and guidelines, available on the Policy and Advisory Library (PAL) at:

- [Recruitment in Schools](#)
- [Suitability for Employment Checks](#)
- [School Council Employment](#)
- [Contractor OHS Management.](#)

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching registration
- collect and record:
 - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
 - the person's history of working with children
 - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

Staff induction

All newly appointed staff will be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program will include a focus on:

- the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document)
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- the Child Abuse (including grooming) – Identification and Response Policy and Procedures and
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

Ongoing supervision and management of staff

Mentone Girls' Secondary College recognises that maintaining a child safe culture requires ongoing professional learning, supervision and reflection.

All staff undertaking child-connected work are appropriately supervised by their manager or a member of the Leadership Team.

Child safety responsibilities form part of:

- professional conversations
- performance and development processes / statement of expectations
- classroom observations
- leadership meetings
- staff meetings
- annual professional learning.

Staff are expected to maintain high standards of professional conduct at all times and to model behaviours that promote student safety, wellbeing and inclusion.

Where concerns arise regarding an employee's conduct or suitability to work with children, these concerns will be managed promptly and in accordance with Department of Education policies, industrial agreements and legislative requirements.

The safety and wellbeing of students will always be the school's primary consideration.

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be required to have a valid VIT registration (for Teaching Staff) or a Working With Children's Check (Education Support Staff) be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our school and department policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

Suitability of volunteers

All volunteers are required to comply with our [Volunteers Policy](#) which describes how we assess the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing induction and training, and supervision and management.

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.

Staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- our school's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices
- completing the [Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#) online module annually
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment.

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing, for example, training for our volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

School council training and education

To ensure our school council is equipped with the knowledge required to make decisions in the best interests of student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment, the council is trained at least annually. Training includes guidance on:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse
- child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment
- The MGSC child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices

Complaints and reporting processes

Mentone Girls' Secondary College fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our school's Complaint Policy. The [Complaints Policy](#) can be found at on our School Website under Policies.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including school council employees and homestay providers) must follow our Child Abuse (including grooming) – [Identification and Response Policy and Procedures](#). Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school.

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, we will ensure our school follows:

- the [Four Critical Actions](#) for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child
- the [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending

Our [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#) and [Bullying Prevention Policy](#) cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

Communications

Mentone Girls' Secondary College is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on our website including the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document), Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Abuse (including grooming) – Identification and Response Policy and Procedure
- displaying PROTECT around the school
- updates in our school newsletter or Compass Newsfeeds
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings.

Privacy and information sharing

Mentone Girls' Secondary College collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws. For information on how our school collects, uses and discloses information refer to: [Schools' Privacy Policy](#).

Records management

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the Department of Education's policy: [Records Management – School Records](#)

Review of child safety practices

At Mentone Girls' Secondary College we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

- review and improve our policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community.

Related policies and procedures

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related school policies, procedures, and codes. These include our:

- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Child Abuse (including grooming) – Identification and Response Policy and Procedures
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- Digital Learning Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Visitors Policy
- Volunteers Policy

All policies can be found on our Website under [Policies](#).

Related Department of Education policies

- [Bullying Prevention and Response Policy](#)
- [Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes](#)
- [Complaints Policy](#)
- [Contractor OHS Management Policy](#)
- [Digital Learning in Schools Policy](#)
- [Family Violence Support](#)
- [Child Abuse \(including grooming\) – Identification and Response](#)
- [Policy and Guidelines for Recruitment in Schools](#)
- [Reportable Conduct Policy](#)
- [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#)
- [Supervision of Students Policy](#)
- [Visitors in Schools Policy](#)
- [Volunteers in Schools Policy](#)
- [Working with Children and other Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors](#)

Other related documents

- [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- [Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools](#)

Policy status and review

The Principal is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at least every two years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the Mentone Girls' Secondary College community.

Approval

Created date	30 June 2026
Consultation	Student Wellbeing Team
Endorsed by	Linda Brown, Principal
Endorsed on	13 July 2026
Next review date	July 2028