



1. INTRODUCTION

Methodist Ladies' College (MLC) has a proud history of providing students with a safe and nurturing environment in which to prosper and thrive. This Child Safe Policy is an overarching document that provides key elements of our approach to protecting children from abuse. It forms the foundation of the College's procedures, practices, decision-making processes and ultimately the College's culture with respect to child safety.

The Child Safe Policy has been approved by the College Management Team (CMT) and endorsed by the MLC Board of Directors.

2. PURPOSE

This Policy provides the framework for:

- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child safety within the College;
- the creation of a positive and robust child safe culture;
- the promotion and open discussion of child safety issues within the College; and,
- compliance with all laws, regulations, and standards relevant to child safety in Victoria.

3. SCOPE

MLC's Child Safe Policy relates to all members of the MLC Community, this includes the College Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, third party contractors and external education providers. The policy applies across all College environments, including at all MLC campuses (Kew and the Boarding House, MLC Banksia and MLC Marshmead), both during and outside school hours and within and outside the physical school environments, including online.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

4.1. Commitment to Child Safety

MLC is committed to providing a child safe and child friendly environment, where children and young people are safe and feel safe to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.

At MLC we have a zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The College regards its child safety responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child safety laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture.

4.2. Child Safe Values and Principles

The College's commitment to child safety is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse.

1. All children have the right to be safe.
2. The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
3. The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected.

4. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Safe Code of Conduct and Staff and Student Professional Boundaries policy.
5. The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.
6. Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our College community.
7. Procedures are in place to screen all staff, Direct Contact Volunteers¹, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers who have direct contact with children.
8. Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
9. Child safety training is mandatory for all staff and Direct Contact Volunteers.
10. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the College community.
11. Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
12. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

4.3. Child Safety Program

MLC is committed to the effective implementation of our Child Safety Program and ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated. We adopt a risk management approach by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety risks based on a range of factors including the nature of our College's activities, physical and online environments and the diversity of the student cohort.

Our Child Safety Program relates to all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse. It includes:

- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and associated key risk indicators;
- clear procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse;
- strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, parents/carers and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters;
- procedures for recruiting and screening staff, Direct Contact Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers;
- procedures for reporting reportable conduct and/or misconduct;
- student wellbeing strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe;
- policies with respect to cultural diversity and students with disabilities;
- a child safety training program;
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children;
- guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality;
- policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Victorian Child Safe Standards);
- a system for continuous review and improvement.

As a part of MLC's induction process, all staff and Direct Contact Volunteers are required to complete training on the content of our Child Safety Program.

¹ **Direct Contact Volunteers** are those volunteers who are involved in providing support, guidance and supervision directly to students and could potentially have direct contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service. The Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic) defines "direct contact" as any contact between a person and a child (aged under 18) that involves: physical contact; face to face contact; contact by post or other written communication; contact by telephone or other oral communication; or contact by email or other electronic communication. Examples of Direct Contact Volunteer activities may include volunteers involved in College camps and excursions, coaching sporting teams or assisting in learning activities.

Additional, ongoing child safety training is required to be undertaken at least annually.

Staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers are supported and supervised by the College to ensure that they are compliant with the College's approach to child safety.

4.4. **Responsibilities**

Child safety is everyone's responsibility. At MLC, all staff, as well as Volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children.

Specific responsibilities include:

- **Board of Directors**

The MLC Board is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow MLC's Child Safe Policy and the Child Safety Program to be effectively implemented within the College and are responsible for holding the Principal and the College Management Team accountable for its effective implementation.

- **The Principal**

The Principal is responsible, and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Safe Policy and the College's Child Safety Program are implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child safety culture is maintained within the College.

- **Child Protection Officers**

A number of staff members have been nominated as the College's Child Protection Officers. Our Child Protection Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child safety issues. They are the first point of contact for raising child safety concerns within the College. They are also responsible for championing child safety within the College and assisting in coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

- **Staff Members**

All staff are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Safe Policy and our Child Safety Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the College's Child Protection Officers.

- **Volunteers**

Direct Contact Volunteers

All Direct Contact Volunteers, as defined in this policy, are required to have a WWCC and be familiar with the content of our Child Safety Program, particularly this MLC Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct, and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse.

It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the College's Child Protection Officers.

Examples of Direct Contact Volunteer activities may include volunteers involved in College excursions, coaching sporting teams, assisting in learning activities or administrative roles.

Indirect Contact Volunteers

Indirect Contact Volunteers are those volunteers who have limited or no 1:1 time with students, are supervised by a College staff member, and have no requirement to directly assist or supervise a specific group of students.

Indirect Contact Volunteers are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment. As such, all Indirect Contact Volunteers are required by

the College to have a WWCC and be familiar with our MLC Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct.

Examples of Indirect Contact Volunteer activities may include assisting with College administrative functions (such as volunteering with the College Archivist), supporting sporting or College events, providing ad hoc learning support when supervised by a staff member.

- **Third-Party Contractors**

All Third-Party Contractors engaged by the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

Third Party Contractors include, for example, maintenance and building personnel, consultants, casual teachers, tutors, sports coaches and College cleaners. It also includes any external individuals engaged by international students whose welfare arrangements are subject to a Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation and Welfare (CAAW) letter (boarding and homestay).

Third Party Contractors engaged by the College are required to be familiar with this Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct. Depending on the nature of their work, Third-Party Contractors may also be required to be familiar with the College's WWCC.

The College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the Third-Party Contractor.

- **External Education Providers**

An External Education Provider is any organisation that the College has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the College.

The delivery of such a course may take place on College premises or elsewhere. Examples of external education providers may include the delivery of specific student wellbeing workshops to students, e.g., Leadership workshops.

All External Education Providers engaged by the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

All External Education Providers engaged by the College are required by the College to have a WWCC and be familiar with our MLC Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct.

Methodist Ladies' College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the External Education Provider.

4.5. Reporting Child Abuse Concerns

Our Child Safety Program provides detailed guidance for the all staff and Direct Contact Volunteers as to how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to one of the College's nominated Child Protection Officers. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.

Staff, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, Volunteers, students, parents/carers and other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse or grooming are asked to contact the Vice Principal who is the College's Senior Child Protection Officer, by phoning 9274 6333 or the MLC Emergency line on 9274 8100.

Communications will be treated confidentially on a "need to know basis".

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger, call Triple zero (000) and request urgent Police assistance.

4.6. Policy and Program Review

Methodist Ladies' College is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Safety Program. The Program is regularly reviewed for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child safety related laws, regulations and standards.

5. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Child Safety Program

6. GOVERNANCE

DOCUMENT DETAILS	
Title:	MCL Child Safety Program – Child Safe Policy
Policy Approver:	Vice Principal
Policy Owner:	Director of Student Wellbeing
Date Created:	July 2016
Review Timeline:	Annual
Date of Next Review:	2022

VERSION CONTROL		
Version	Date	Description
V1	2016	Developed to meet requirements of Ministerial Order 870
V2	2019	Updated to reinforce requirement to communicate child protection measures in place for external contractors, external education providers and international student local support persons.
V3	2021	Revised following a review of MLC's Child Safety Program

AUDIENCE	PUBLICATION LOCATION
All MLC staff	MLC Staff Hub > Document Central
Students	MLC Student Hub
Parents/Guardians	myMLCfamily
Wider community	MLC external website