Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Policy Statement

The Loreto College Ballarat Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy reflects the school community's shared commitment and expectations in relation to child safety.

This Policy details how the school community will:

- respond to any allegations of child abuse at school, in a student's home, or in the community.
- promote child safety and protect children from abuse
- comply with the requirements of Ministerial Order 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises
- seek to mitigate and prevent the risk of abuse.

Loreto College Ballarat is committed to protecting its students from all aspects of harm, and has established strategies, practices, policies and procedures to enable it to fulfil its commitment.

All policies, protocols and procedures flow from the school's vision:

Loreto College Ballarat offers an innovative and contemporary education that engages students and prioritises student agency. We are committed to following in the footsteps of Mary Ward by developing courageous students able to thrive in a changing world.

The College takes a zero-tolerance approach to any behaviour that jeopardises student safety and wellbeing (at school, in the home, or in the community). The College is committed to its student safety and wellbeing responsibilities in the context of the College's values.

The College has a pastoral, moral and legal responsibility to create a connection between student safety and learning, especially in a personalised learning environment where staff discover what motivates and inspires students and focus on their strengths and ambitions.

The College treats seriously its reporting obligations in relation to student safety matters, including to CCYP (reportable conduct), Child Protection (mandatory reporting) and Victoria Police (mandatory and criminal reporting). It recognises that whilst reporting obligations may differ depending on a person's position in the College, all staff are required to uphold this policy by ensuring that student safety and wellbeing matters are reported internally, and where required, externally.

This policy, therefore, demonstrates how the College will meet its responsibilities and commitment to student safety and wellbeing. It is a child safety policy made in accordance *with Ministerial Order No. 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and Boarding Premises.*

The College's approach to student safety and wellbeing is guided by a number of overarching principles and values (listed below) that promote the development and regular review of strategies, practices, policies and procedures to uphold the commitment to protect students from all forms of harm:

- All students at the College have a right to be safe and to feel safe.
- The safety and wellbeing of students is the College's paramount consideration.
- The safety and wellbeing of students is dependent upon the existence of a student safe culture.
- Student safety and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility.
- Student safety and wellbeing awareness is embodied, promoted and openly discussed within the school community.
- Families have the right to participate in decisions affecting their child and they, and the school community, are engaged and informed about the College's approach to student safety and wellbeing.
- To ensure equity is upheld in policy and practice, staff need to be aware of students' diverse circumstances, needs, and vulnerabilities in order to provide support and respond to those who are vulnerable.

Context

A Student Safety and Wellbeing Culture

Creating and maintaining a student safety and wellbeing culture requires input from the entire school community. The aim is to provide a safe environment that aligns with the College's mission and values.

Through processes and practices, a student safety and wellbeing culture is championed and modelled at all levels of the College. Student safety and wellbeing are embedded in the College's leadership, governance and culture. The College sets clear expectations regarding student safety and wellbeing, ensuring that at all times, governance arrangements facilitate the implementation of this policy (including by making student safety and wellbeing a standing agenda item and reviewing the College's student safety and wellbeing processes across all levels).

Support and Engagement of All Students

The College appreciates that a student safety and wellbeing environment can be different for every student, and in delivering this, supports and respects the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as students with a disability or who are otherwise vulnerable (including students who identify as LGBTIQA+ and those with challenging home situations/out-of-home care).

The College supports and encourages students to talk openly and share their views, particularly about matters that directly affect them.

The College will aim to ensure students (and their parents/carers/guardians) are provided with the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain a student's own, and their peers, personal safety and wellbeing. This including understanding, identifying, discussing and reporting student safety and wellbeing matters, as well as the standards of behaviour expected of students attending the College.

The College will promote its student safety and wellbeing practices to students in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand and user-friendly, including by:

- the appointment of Child Safety Officers who champion student safety and wellbeing
- training staff to recognise the indicators of harm to students, including harm caused not only by adults but also by other children and young people, and harm in online environments
- collaborating with parents to ensure that they are provided with information about child abuse and reportable conduct

- encouraging students to identify safe and unsafe environments and situations, including in an online environment
- setting clear student safety and wellbeing standards so that staff, students and the school community are aware of the standards that are expected, and those which fall short of the College's expectations
- distributing and displaying child-friendly publications, including posters which promote student safety and wellbeing (e.g. PROTECT posters)
- clearly communicating information on where students can access support, make a report about safety or wellbeing concerns.

Statement of commitment to student safety and wellbeing

To students, Loreto College Ballarat commits to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people by:

- Providing children and young people with positive and nurturing experiences
- Listening to children and young people and empowering them by ensuring that they understand their rights (including safety, information and participation), and by taking their views seriously and addressing any concerns that they raise
- Taking action to ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse or harm
- Ensuring that the needs of all children and young people enrolled in the College are met, especially the needs of those who are most vulnerable
- Recognising the importance of friendships and encouraging support from peers, to help children and young people feel safe.
- Developing a culture that facilitates student participation.
- Teaching children and young people the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing
- Seeking input and feedback from children and young people regarding the creation of a safe school environment.

To families, carers and guardians, Loreto College Ballarat commits to:

- Communicating honestly and openly with families, carers and guardians about the wellbeing and safety of children and young people
- Seeking the views of families, carers and guardians about child- safety and wellbeing practices, policies, and procedures
- Transparency in decision-making in instances where it will not compromise the safety of children or young people
- Open engagement and communication about a child safe approach related to child safety and wellbeing
- Ensuring that relevant information relating to child safety and wellbeing is accessible to families, carers and guardians
- Acknowledging the cultural diversity of children and young people and their families and being sensitive to how this may impact on student safety issues
- Reviewing and improving school systems to protect children and young people from abuse.

To school staff, Loreto College Ballarat commits to:

- Providing all staff with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles, and to ensure that staff are attuned to recognise signs of harm and can facilitate child-friendly ways for children and young people to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns.
- 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 Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and the DOBCEL Safeguarding Children and Young People: Code of Conduct, as well as training in mandatory reporting obligations and staff responsibilities to report concerns
- Listening to concerns voiced by employees, clergy, volunteers, and contractors about keeping children and young people safe from harm
- Providing opportunities for employees, volunteers, contractors, and clergy to receive formal debriefing and appropriate assistance in relation to incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.

Communication

This policy is available on the College website.

This policy is available to staff as part of the College and the Loreto College Board's internal policies and procedures. Aspects of and updates to the College's student safety and wellbeing framework, including this policy, will be addressed in the College's professional development updates, training programs, bulletins, Loreto College newsletters and Executive Director's Updates.

Breach of this Policy

The College emphasises the need for staff to comply with all the requirements of this policy.

Staff found to be in breach of the requirements of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or engagement (as the case may be). Breaches may also result in notifications to appropriate authorities and/or the Police.

To implement this policy:

- the Loreto College Ballarat Board and Principal will review this policy and its accompanying procedures at least every two years (or more frequently after a significant student safety and wellbeing incident) and implement improvements where necessary
- annual training and refresher sessions on this policy will be provided to all staff
- the Principal will monitor staff compliance with this policy.

Scope

This policy applies to all Board members, the Principal, employees, volunteers, clergy, contractors, labour hire workers and other authorised personnel required to perform functions on the College's premises, or at school-organised activities and events. Collectively, these individuals are referred to as 'staff'.

This policy extends to any other person who is engaged in student-connected work at the College, or who otherwise has direct and regular contact with the students (whether supervised or not).

Legislative Context

Education Training and Reform Act 2006 (Vic)

Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005 (Vic)

Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)

Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)

Ministerial Order 1359

Definitions specific to this policy

TERM	DEFINITION
Behaviour that causes emotional or psychological harm to a child	Includes sexual offences, sexual misconduct, physical violence and significant neglect. However, other types of behaviour can also cause emotional or psychological harm including, for example, severe or sustained instances of verbal abuse; coercive or manipulative behaviour; hostility towards, or rejection of, a child; and humiliation, belittling or scapegoating.
CCYP	Commission for Children and Young People.
Child	A person under the age of 18 years, except in the case of certain mandatory reporting obligations which may define a child to be under a different age and over 12 years.
Child abuse	All forms of child abuse defined in the Education and Training Reform Act (ETR Act) including: • any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or grooming. • the infliction on a child, of physical violence or serious emotional or psychological harm. • serious neglect of a child.
Mandatory reporter	See section 182 of the Children, Youth and Families Act (CYF Act). It includes but is not limited to registered teachers (including early childhood teachers), staff with post-secondary qualifications employed in the care, education or minding of children, school principals, registered nurses, students in training to become teachers (who, under relevant legislation, have been granted permission to teach), registered psychologists, out of home care workers, early childhood workers and any other person referred to in section 182 of the CYF Act.
Neglect	Failure to meet obligations and responsibilities to keep a child safe and well. It can include: • supervisory neglect, which is the absence or inattention of a staff member which places the child at risk of physical harm or injury, sexual abuse or allows other criminal behaviour to occur. • physical neglect, which is the failure to provide basic physical necessities for a child, such as adequate food, clothing, housing or medical attention.
Parent	A guardian or carer. 'Parents' has a corresponding meaning.
Reportable conduct	Conduct which requires a report to be made to a specified authority. It includes:

	• A sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of a child. • Sexual misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence of a child. • Physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child. • Any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child. • Significant neglect of a child. • In the above definition, 'child' has the meaning given in the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (CWS Act).
School Community	Those who are directly and indirectly involved with the College, including students, parents, carers and alumni, as well as businesses, charitable organisations and locals that are affiliated with the College.
Significant	In relation to harm or neglect, the harm is more than trivial or temporary and is serious enough to warrant interventions regardless of whether it is from physical or sexual abuse, neglect or other risks to a child's wellbeing.
Staff and staff members	the Principal, employees, volunteers, clergy, contractors, labour hire workers, and other authorised personnel required to perform functions on the College's premises, or at school-organised activities and events.
Student	A child under 18 years of age, and any student at the College over 18 years of age, and 'students' has a corresponding meaning.
Student-connected work	Work authorised by the College and performed by an adult in a school environment while children or young people are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Supporting Documentation

Internal

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Recordkeeping Procedure
- Child Safe Governance Policy
- Child Safe Risk Management Policy
- Diversity and Equity Policy
- Engaging Families and Caregivers in Child Safety Policy
- PROTECT Policies
- Student Empowerment and Participation Policy
- Bullying Prevention (including Cyber-bullying) [Student] Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy and Procedures
- VIT and WWCC Procedures

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