



Minaret College Child Safety Policy

Rationale

The child safety policy: sets out the Minaret College's approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe; the policy provides the framework for the Minaret College approach to Child Safe Standards.

Minaret College has zero tolerance towards child abuse and is committed to the wellbeing and protection of all students; from any harm, whilst participating in school activities both during and outside school hours. This includes online school environments (e.g. email and intranet systems). Minaret College prohibits all forms of corporal punishment and considers it as an illegal practice; this is communicated to all staff at Minaret College.

Staff have a responsibility for building and maintaining a child safe environment. This responsibility extends to the identification and timely response to concerns regarding the possible sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect of a child.

Scope

This Policy applies to all staff, students, parents, visitors, volunteers and contractors; whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people at Minaret College, across a range of school forums both inside and outside of school hours.

The Student Welfare Specialist in each sub-school/campus is responsible for implementing the school's child safe standards policy and the mandated requirements of Ministerial Order 870. Staff may seek advice from the Student Welfare Specialists if they have concerns about child safe matters and when considering whether to make a report about a child in need of protection.

It is necessary that all individuals mentioned above are made aware of the policy and the school's underlying philosophy towards the care of children. This is done effectively through means of initial staff induction and ongoing PDs.

Purpose

- To embed a culture of child safety within the Minaret College community.
- To raise awareness of child abuse.
- To raise awareness of the needs of all children.
- To increase awareness of the need for sensitive and diverse approaches to child safety issues due to Indigenous, cultural or linguistic background or disability.
- To define the roles and responsibilities of the College and staff in protecting the safety and wellbeing of students.
- To increase awareness of the processes for reporting child abuse.
- To define the rights and responsibilities of students.

Definitions

A child means every human being below the age of eighteen years.

Child Safety is defined as the responsibilities, measures and activities that is undertaken to safeguard children from both intentional and unintentional harm.

Child abuse includes:

- (a) any act committed against a child involving
 - i. a sexual offence; or
 - ii. an offence under section 498(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming); and
- (b) the infliction, on a child, of
 - i. physical violence; or
 - ii. serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- (c) serious neglect of a child.

Child abuse may be a deliberate act or it may be failing to act to prevent harm. Child abuse consists of anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do, intentionally or unintentionally which harms a child or damages their prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood.

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- (a) a campus of the school;
- (b) online school environments (including email and intranet systems); and
- (c) other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

School governing authority means the School Board.

School staff means an individual working in a school environment who is:

- i. directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority;
- ii. a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)

Commitment to Child Safety

To promote child safety at Minaret College we commit to the following:

Minaret College will handle all child safety concerns in a sensitive, confidential, private and timely manner.

That all children inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with a disability involved at Minaret College have a right to feel and be safe and also be protected from any forms of harm. We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people participating in our school. We aim to create a safe and friendly environment where all children and young people can thrive, be valued and feel safe.

Implementation

Minaret College has a responsibility to:

- I. Ensure all individuals involved with Minaret College meet all the legislative requirements regarding the protection and safety of children and young people.
- II. Educate and support families regarding safety, health and wellbeing of children and young people.
- III. Educate families regarding Minaret College Child Safety policy.
- IV. Educate staff regarding child safety reporting protocols.
- V. Assist staff in understanding the local community and significant cultures within the community in establishing culturally appropriate responses

Minaret College has responsibility to ensure all staff:

- I. Have undertaken an appropriate police and Working with Children Check.
 - II. Are provided with appropriate training to recognise indicators that a student may be in need of protection.
 - III. Have an understanding of student diversity and the need for a variety of approaches to child safety issues.
 - IV. Are aware of their mandatory obligation to report a student who may be in need of protection.
 - V. Are aware of the procedures for reporting child safety concerns.
 - VI. Abide by the Minaret College Community commitment statement, Bullying & Harassment Policy, Student Grievances Policy, Student Welfare Policy, Mandatory Reporting policy and Codes of Conduct. (Refer to Minaret College Student Diary)
- A staff member who becomes aware that a co-worker or person(s) associated with the College (such as a contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a student must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk.
 - Steps need to be taken to notify the Principal or Head of Campus and remove the individual from child-related work, pending investigation.
 - All contractors and volunteers are required to have a Working with Children Check and visitors are required to report to be supervised at all times by a staff member.
 - Any staff member who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 must disclose that information to police.

General Responsibilities

It is expected that every employee will:

- Take practical steps to avoid placing themselves and students in circumstances which may be considered a risk to their safety or wellbeing.

- Consider what they do and say in terms of the potential for (in interacting with students) misunderstanding, allegations, misinterpretation or innuendo.
- Avoid being alone (without reasonable visibility from outside the room) with students.
- Comply fully with preventative supervisory practices (as set out below).
- Take an active role to ensure the protection of students and children at Minaret College premises and elsewhere.
- Report any conduct or event which poses a risk to the safety and wellbeing of students, to the supervising adult or Head of Campus or School Principal without delay.
- Maintain strict confidentiality of information relating to events or individuals in regard to allegations of unwelcome or inappropriate conduct (except to report it as required to Heads of School and external authorities).
- Fully cooperate with any investigation, formal or informal, which occurs as a consequence of allegations or misunderstandings regarding conduct being brought to the school's attention;
- Refrain from activities, conduct or communication involving students that would reasonably be seen to have a negative impact on the reputation of the school or the employees or students of the school.
- If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Preventative Supervisory Practices

It is understandable that academic, sporting and co-curricular aspects of an individual's work may bring them into situations where they may be in close or regular contact with students and or other children, and may develop rapport or may have incidental contact with students outside the context of their duties at School.

It is expected that the following principles will be observed by all Minaret College Staff:

- Whenever required to be in a one to one situation with a student or child, the individual will ensure that the door is open or that another adult is in attendance.
- Whenever possible, individuals will avoid 'one to one' situations with students and children.
- Work within the scope of their professional expertise and the requirements of their position description.
- Take a balanced and fair approach to managing relationships with students (no 'favourites' or special arrangements which might be construed to be inappropriate).
- Use appropriate language and subject matter in the presence of or in communicating with students and children.

- Refrain from any behaviour (either observed or by the individual) that would constitute bullying or manipulation is not to be tolerated, trivialised or ignored.
- Refrain from any behaviour which would constitute that bullying or manipulation of students or other children does not occur.
- Relationships and interactions between students and staff are not to be overly familiar or intimate.
- Attempts by students or other children to build relationships which would be inappropriately familiar or intimate are discouraged and must be reported to the Head of Campus or Principal.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers and casual staff are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check.

We undertake comprehensive reference checks, police record checks and Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration checks to ensure that we are recruiting the appropriate people.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Duty of Care

Staff or volunteers working at Minaret College have a duty of care to support and protect the children and young people with whom they are professionally involved.

When staff members form a reasonable belief that a child or young person has been harmed or otherwise at risk of harm, they are ethically bound to take action to protect the safety and wellbeing of that child or young person. For some staff members this obligation is legally mandated.

Duty of care is breached if a person:

- Does something that a reasonable person in that person's position would not do in a particular situation,
- Fails to do something that a reasonable person in that person's position would do in the circumstances,
- Acts or fails to act in a way that causes harm to someone to whom the person owes a duty of care.

Mandatory reporting

Mandated staff members must make a report as soon as possible after establishing a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of safety from significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse; and the child's parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

The following professionals are prescribed as mandatory reporters:

- Teachers registered to teach or who have permission to teach
- School Principals
- Registered medical practitioners and Nurses
- Police

In the event of two or more mandated reporters forming a belief, only one of the mandated members is required to report, however, the other staff members need to ensure their own beliefs were included in the report made by the initial reporter.

Non-mandated staff members

Any person, including non-mandated licensed children's services or school staff are able report their concerns when they believe that a child or young person is at risk of harm.

Failure to disclose

All adults, not just professionals who work with children, have a legal obligation to report to Victoria Police where they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16.

Failure to disclose the information may amount to a criminal offence unless you have a "reasonable excuse" or have an "exemption" from doing so.

Risk Management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have personal contact with a student on social media).

To promote child safety in the school environment, Minaret College firmly believes and advocates that students have a right to:

- Take part in learning programs that meet their individual needs.
- Feel secure and to be safe in a caring and supportive environment.
- Work and play without interference in an atmosphere of harmony and cooperation.
- Receive respect, kindness and courtesy and to be treated with fairness.
- Have learning continue without disruption in a supportive environment.
- Be valued for their individuality including; race, gender, cultural, physical, religious or intellectual diversity.
- Expect the school rules are fair, consistently implemented and respect the rights of all involved.

All Minaret College staff have a responsibility to do the following:

- Provide opportunities for all students to learn.
- Treat their students with courtesy and dignity.
- Work within the limits of their professional expertise.
- Maintain objectivity in their relationships with students.
- Ensure they are always in a professional relationship with the students in their school whether at school or not.

All Parents have a responsibility to do the following:

- Treat others respectfully and to be aware of and follow the policies and processes in use at the school.
- Learn in partnership with teachers when his or her own child has been identified as needing extra help or assistance.
- Learn about and support the expectations embodied in the school and the particular rules of the child's classroom.
- Bring to the notice of the teacher any issues of concern regarding family matters which may affect the child's behaviour at school.

All Minaret College students have a responsibility to do the following:

- Care and value themselves, their teachers, fellow students, the school and their community.
- Be safety conscious in relation to themselves and others.
- Treat others with respect and good manners.
- Develop a sense of accountability for their actions.
- Work to achieve their personal best whilst allowing others to do the same.
- Allow for others to learn and to respect the rights of others.
- Explore their full potential in their learning.
- Abide by the guidelines outlined in the Minaret College Statement of Values, Student Codes of Conduct, Bullying & Harassment Policy and Internet usage policy.

A more detailed account of Expectations for Conduct of students, teachers and parents can be found in the Minaret College Codes of Conduct.

Breach:

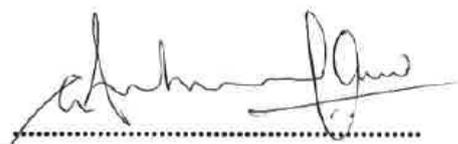
Breach of this policy shall be considered either misconduct, serious misconduct or gross misconduct (depending on the circumstances) and may result in Disciplinary action which may lead to termination of employment and / or reporting to relevant Authorities.

**The role of Minaret College concerning the general welfare of students is outlined in a range of school policies and procedures. This policy is intended to complement other policies and procedures that already exist in Minaret College.*

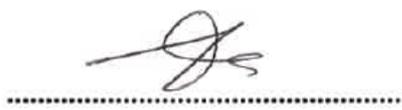
Related Legislations:

- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (CYFA)
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (ETRA)
- Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (ETRR)
- Children's Services Act 1996 (Act)
- Children's Services Regulations 2009 (Regulations)
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Act)
- Ministerial Order No. 870

This policy was last ratified by Minaret College Board in February 2018.



Signature of Board Secretary



Signature of Board Chairman