



# ONLINE SAFETY POLICY

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The College must ensure that physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children, young people and students to be harmed. Online safety also includes the safe and responsible use of information and communication technologies. This includes privacy and information protection, respectful communication and knowing how to get help to deal with online issues.

Common online safety issues and risks of harm online include:

- **Cyber bullying** is the ongoing abuse of power to threaten or harm another person through the use of technology (Refer to our Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy);
- **Exposure** to inappropriate imagery or content
- **Grooming** is predatory conduct to gain trust from a child and the people surrounding the child with the intention to commit later sexual abuse
- **Image-based abuse or sexting** is the sending or posting of provocative or sexual photos, messages or videos online;
- **Identity theft** is the fraudulent assumption of a person's private information for their personal gain. Students are exposed to these risks as they are often unaware of the safety issues surrounding their digital footprint; and
- **Predatory behaviour** where a student is targeted online by a stranger who attempts to arrange a face to face meeting, in an attempt to engage in inappropriate behaviour.

## 2 SCOPE

This policy applies to all College online and virtual environments made available or authorised by the College for use by a student, including emails, portals, intranet systems, software application, collaboration tools and online services, on devices owned by the College and personal devices.

Online safety issues most commonly occur through a student's use of their own technology devices (e.g. smart phone, tablet, iPad, laptop, home computer). Safe use of technology whilst at school is managed through our Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy. The ICT Policy addresses responsible online conduct, as does the Student Code of Conduct.

This policy applies to students and College Staff (which includes employees, contractors, volunteers and ministers of religion).

### **3 MINARET COLLEGE'S POLICY**

Minaret College recognises its duty to students to provide a safe and positive learning environment which includes the safe, appropriate and responsible use of information and communication technologies and safety in all aspects of the College environment. The College environment includes online and virtual school environments made available or authorised by the College for use by students.

It is our policy that:

- Online environments and online conduct should be promoted as a valuable educational tool;
- Online safety be managed through a 'whole of school community' approach involving students, staff and parents/carers;
- Online safety and cyber bullying prevention strategies be implemented within the College on a continuous basis with a focus on teaching age appropriate skills and strategies to empower staff, students and parents/carers to recognise online safety issues and respond appropriately;
- Cyber bullying response strategies be tailored to the circumstances of each incident; and
- Our bullying prevention, intervention and online safety strategies are reviewed on an annual basis against best practice.

### **4 ONLINE SAFETY STRATEGIES**

Minaret College recognises that the implementation of whole of school online safety strategies is the most effective way of minimising risks related to our students engaging in online activity.

The following initiatives form part of our overall online safety strategy within the College:

#### *Identification and mitigation of risks*

- regular risk assessments of online safety are undertaken by surveying students to identify online safety issues and prior to introducing new online systems or software;
- reporting of online safety incidents is encouraged and made easy through the establishment of multiple reporting channels;
- records of reported online safety incidents are maintained and analysed, in order to identify systemic issues and to implement targeted prevention strategies where appropriate

#### *Education and empowerment of students*

- a structured curriculum and peer group support system, that provides age-appropriate information and skills relating to online safety (including cyber bullying) to students over the course of the academic year;
- promotion of a supportive environment that encourages the development of positive relationships and communication in the online world;
- promotion of responsible bystander behaviour amongst students, so students know how they can report online safety issues to the College and will be taken seriously;
- promotion of students' rights to privacy and access to information;
- promotion of student online safety awareness by participating in relevant online safety related events;
- online safety posters are displayed strategically within the school

*Role of adults in the College community*

- education, training and professional development of staff in online safety strategies;
- regular provision of information to parents/carers to raise awareness of online safety as a school community issue. This will equip them to recognise signs of online safety risks, as well as to provide them with clear paths for raising any concerns they may have relating to online safety and/or cyber bullying directly with the school; and
- promotion of responsible bystander behaviour amongst staff and parents/carers (this may occur where a bystander observes inappropriate online behaviour either being perpetrated by, or targeted at, a student).

## **5 STAFF RESPONSIBILITY**

All staff are responsible to:

- a) Model appropriate online behaviour at all times;
- b) Refer any online safety related issues to the Online Safety Primary Contacts; and
- c) Acknowledge the right of parents to speak with school authorities if they believe their child is being bullied.

## **6 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

If parents, carers, Staff, children or young people have feedback about this Policy and/or Minaret College's online safety practices, please contact [admin@minaret.vic.edu.au](mailto:admin@minaret.vic.edu.au). We take a whole-of-school approach to manage online safety for our students and ensure families and the College community have a say in the development of this policy and related procedures.

## **7 SIGNAGE**

Online safety posters are displayed strategically around the school.

## **8 PRIVACY**

When implementing online safety strategies, Staff need to consider the privacy of students. For example, ongoing monitoring and surveillance of all online activities may not be appropriate, however, when a specific risk is identified, intervention may be appropriate.

Staff can empower students to understand their privacy rights and protect themselves online by teaching students:

- how to manage their digital wellbeing and their digital identity;
- what strong and secure passwords are;
- how to respond to someone asking them to send a photo; and
- what methods of online communication are appropriate for different purposes.

## **9 IMPLEMENTATION**

This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- Staff training;
- Student and parent/carer education and information;
- Effective incident reporting procedures;
- Effective management of online safety incidents when reported;
- The creation of a 'no bullying' culture within the College community;
- Effective record keeping procedures; and
- Initiation of corrective actions where necessary.

## **10 DISCIPLINE FOR BREACH OF POLICY**

Where a staff member breaches this policy Minaret College will take disciplinary action, including in the case of serious breaches, summary dismissal.

Where a student breaches this Policy, it may be considered a breach of the Student Code of Conduct, for example for cyber bullying.

## **11 RELATED POLICIES**

- Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy
- Student Code of Conduct
- Parent Code of Conduct
- Staff Code of Conduct

## **12 USEFUL RESOURCES**

- Esmart - <https://www.esmart.org.au/>
- e-Safety Commissioner - <https://www.esafety.gov.au/>
- ThinkUKnow - <https://www.thinkuknow.org.au/>
- Safer Internet Day - <https://www.saferinternetday.org/>

## **DOCUMENT CONTROL**

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