Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Our Luther College community is committed to providing a child safe environment where young people are safe from abuse and harm and feel confident to actively participate.

1. Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing

Luther College has a zero tolerance for child abuse and harm. We are committed to acting in young people's best interests, keeping them safe from harm and actively supporting their wellbeing. We promote a child safe culture by prioritising the safety and wellbeing of young people and helping them feel confident and engaged to participate in a safe and inclusive environment.

2. Purpose

This policy forms the foundation of the college's comprehensive approach to child safety and wellbeing and guides the development of our child safe culture. It informs the programs, procedures and practices that ensure we implement the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

This policy provides the framework for:

- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child safety and wellbeing 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 the service we provide children.

3. Definitions

Child Abuse	Child abuse includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect of a child and a child's exposure to family violence.
Harm	Harm is damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, including as a result of child abuse by adults or the conduct of other children. It includes physical, emotional, sexual and psychological harm. Harm can arise from a single act or event and can also be cumulative, that is, arising as a result of a series of acts or events over a period of time.
Child/Children	Child/Children means a person who is under the age of 18 years.
Volunteer	A volunteer is a person who works without payment or financial reward for the College and may be members of the parent/grandparent body or from the wider College or local community.
Direct contact	The Worker Screening Act 2020 defines 'direct contact' as any contact between a person and a child (aged under 18) that involves: • physical contact; or • face to face contact; or • contact by post or other written communication; or

	- 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.
Direct Contact Volunteers	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.
Indirect Contact Volunteers	Indirect Contact Volunteers are those volunteers who are involved in providing support and services whilst not directly assisting a specific group of students.

4. Implementation of the Victorian Child Safe Standards

4.1. Cultural safety for Aboriginal children

Luther College is committed to creating environments where Aboriginal culture is celebrated and Aboriginal children, families and community members are welcomed and included. Strategies to embed cultural safety for Aboriginal children include:

- an Acknowledgement of Country at all meetings, assemblies and events
- consulting with families and members of the Aboriginal community to identify opportunities to promote Aboriginal culture and practices in the curriculum and co-curricular programs
- providing opportunities for children to share their cultural identity and express their culture, including through performance and during community activities
- supporting children who wish to explore their culture, including consulting with their family and relevant Aboriginal organisations
- providing training for staff on the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children
- celebrating NAIDOC Week and acknowledging significant events including National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week
- seeking feedback from Aboriginal children, families and communities on their experience at Luther College, particularly how safe they feel expressing their identity including their culture.

4.2. A commitment to child safety and wellbeing

A child safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels at Luther College. Strategies to embed the child safe culture include:

- Everyone has a role in identifying and managing risks of child abuse and harm.
- The College Council ensures that appropriate resources are made available to allow the Child Safe Program to be effectively implemented and are responsible for holding the Principal and the Executive Leadership Team accountable
- The Principal will ensure that the Child Safe Program is implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child safety and wellbeing culture is enabled

- The Executive Leadership Team will ensure that our community prioritises child safety and that action is taken when anyone raises concerns about child safety. The team will champion and model a child safe culture. The team will work to create a positive culture around reporting so that people feel comfortable to raise concerns
- Child Safety 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 and assisting in coordinating responses to child safety incidents
- All staff are required to be familiar our Child Safety Program and their obligations. 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 or harm with one of the college's Child Safety Officers
- The Executive Leadership Team will make sure that staff consider child safety and wellbeing when conducting risk assessments and taking action to manage risks in accordance with this policy. They will also ensure that appropriate child safety training for staff and volunteers is identified and completed.
- Pastoral Care structures are designed to support and empower all students and keep them safe.

4.3. Taking child participation and empowerment seriously

Our Child Safe Program empowers children to know their rights and have their rights respected, participate in decision-making and have their voices heard. Strategies include:

- Promotion of friendships and peer support for children through our transition and Peer Support programs
- actively seeking to include children's views and ideas in our organisational planning, delivery of curriculum, co-curricular and leadership programs
- implementation of Restorative Practices approaches that teach children to recognise and repair harm, encourages children to be supportive of each other and does not tolerate bullying or abusive behaviour
- We respect the rights of children and provide them with information about their rights including the right to be safe
- We regularly communicate with children about what they can do if they feel unsafe.
- We value the voices of children and will act on safety concerns raised by children or their families through our pastoral care system:
  - Regular discussions with children, including child-led conversations on what makes them feel safe and unsafe.
  - A Student Voice tile on our Learning Management System that is used to seek feedback about any proposed significant changes and their views considered in the decision-making process.
  - Regular information provided to children and families through the Principal's Page and Omnia News.

4.4. Involving families and community

We provide information to families and community about our child safe program and practices including through:

- publishing the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Child Safe Code of Conduct on our website and Learning Management System
- including information about our child safety program, policies and procedures on Parent Links on the Learning Management System
- including articles and information on child safety and wellbeing, and reminders about our policies and procedures, in the Principal's Page and Omnia News.

We recognise the important role of families and involve parents and carers when making significant decisions about their child. Students, parents and the community are welcome to provide feedback at any time through our contact email address and are encouraged to raise any concerns they have with us.

4.5. Respecting equity and diversity

We value diversity and equity for all children. To achieve this, we:

- welcome and support participation of all children, including children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, LGBTIQ+ children and Aboriginal children and their families
- offer students and families the opportunity to provide information about themselves, including any specific needs to participate fully in our programs
- have zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and take action when discrimination or exclusion is identified
- deliver programs that reflect the diversity of our students, their interests and cultures
- strive to reflect the diversity of our community through representation in our staff
- acknowledge and celebrate important cultural dates in Home Group, Chapel, and Assemblies
- commit to ensuring our facilities and online activities promote inclusion of children of all abilities.

4.6. Ensuring that staff are suitable and supported

Our recruitment and staff development procedures including screening, induction and supervision to ensure that all staff and volunteers reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice. To achieve this, we:

- Implement rigorous recruiting and screening procedures for staff, volunteers, third party contractors, external providers and College Council members
- Ensure questions regarding child safety and wellbeing are at the centre of interview and reference check processes
- Only employ and retain staff who are appropriate to engage with children
- Require all staff to complete annual child safety training in relation to policies and procedures, external reporting obligations (such as mandatory reporting), the Code of Conduct, the complaints process, information sharing and record keeping.
- Will, where required, provide supervision, support and performance management of staff to ensure they meet their obligations

4.7. Child-focused processes for reporting concerns

Luther College ensures that it has accessible and responsive child safety management processes that are focused on the needs and rights of children through:

- Our Child Safety Program, which provides detailed guidance for staff, volunteers and members of the College Council, as to how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and harm and how to report concerns to the Senior Child Safety Officer or one of the Child Safety Officers. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse and harm incidents to relevant authorities.
- Ensuring that Staff, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, Volunteers, students, parents and other community members who have concerns regarding a child's safety and wellbeing contact the Senior Child Protection Officer, one of the Child Safety Officers or the Principal.
- Treating all reports of child abuse and child safety concerns seriously, whether they are made by an adult or a child and whether they are about the conduct of an adult or a child. All reports of child safety concerns will be responded to promptly and thoroughly.
- An easy-to-understand information sheet (PROTECT) which is provided for children, families and the community to know about the process for reporting concerns, the supports available to those making a report and those involved in the process.
- If a concern includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, ensuring that staff and volunteers report it in accordance with the procedures.
- Requiring staff and volunteers to prioritise children's safety in any response and to report all potentially criminal conduct to Victoria Police.
- If appropriate, Staff breaching the policy or code of conduct being subject to actions to support child safety including:
  - being stood down during an investigation
  - removal of access to facilities and systems
  - terminated following an investigation
- Full, accurate and confidential record keeping about all child safety concerns:
  - all child safety concerns will be recorded and marked as confidential in the pastoral care records system.
  - Records which may assist with the investigation of a report or child safety concern will be identified and kept as part of the record of an investigation in the Principal's Office files. Records will be kept even if an investigation does not substantiate a complaint.
  - The Principal's Office will keep records and outcomes of any investigations, and the resolution of any reports or complaints. This includes findings made, reasons for decisions and actions taken.

If there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger, call Police on 000 immediately.

4.8. Staff knowledge, skills and awareness

Luther College promotes child safety and wellbeing by ensuring that staff and volunteers are provided with relevant knowledge and skills on an ongoing basis. We support this approach through the following principles and practices:

- Leaders communicate to staff and volunteers that child safety training is mandatory.

- Providing training to staff and volunteers on the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy on induction and at regular intervals, at least annually.
- Training is provided to staff and volunteers that supports their ability to:
  o identify signs of child abuse and harm
  o respond to issues of child safety including internal and external reporting requirements, notifying families and carers and managing risks to children
  o support a person disclosing child harm
  o create culturally safe environments in the college
- Training and guidance on child safety is:
  o appropriate to the college's engagement with children and the needs of our children
  o trauma-informed
  o offered on a regular basis to enable staff and volunteers to keep their skills and knowledge up-to-date
  o regularly reviewed and updated to remain effective.
- Supervision and management of staff and volunteers includes identifying child safety training needs.

4.9. Safe physical and online environments

Luther College promotes child safety and wellbeing in physical and online environments in order to reduce the risk of harm through the following principles and practices:

- Risk Assessments are informed by and responsive to the views and concerns of staff, volunteers and children. Risk Assessments show that there is a balanced approach to the need to manage the risk of harm and abuse against children's rights to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.
- Staff create Risk Assessments so they are aware of risks of child abuse and harm and know what action they need to take to prevent and reduce them.
- Action is taken by staff and volunteers to prevent and reduce risks of child abuse and harm when identified.
- Risk Assessments and management plans are regularly reviewed to keep them up-to-date and include lessons from complaints, concerns and safety incidents.
- leadership and governance ensure risk assessment and management are focused on identifying, preventing and reducing risks of child abuse and harm.
- When negotiating contracts with third parties, contracts include terms that allow the college to take action if the third party does not meet expected child safety and wellbeing standards.
- When third-party contractors are engaged, action is taken to assess whether, and the extent to which, the engagement of third-party contractors poses risks of child abuse and harm.
- Depending on the level of risk posed by third-party contractors, the college will take actions to prevent or reduce risks of child abuse or harm. Appropriate actions may include:
  o requiring third-party contractors to comply with the college's policies and procedures
  o monitoring compliance by third-party contractors with the Child Safe Standards and/or the college's policies and procedures

- working with third-party contractors to identify, prevent and reduce risks of child abuse and harm
- where the college is unable to adequately manage risks of child abuse and harm posed by third-party contractors, we will consider terminating the contract or take other appropriate action to protect children.

- If appropriate, staff, volunteers, parents, carers and children are provided with information about online safety and risks in the online environment, such as online grooming, cyber bullying and sexting. Support is given to reporting negative experiences or concerns.

4.10. Review of child safe policies and practices

Luther College is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Safety Program. The Program will be reviewed every year for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child safety related laws, regulations and standards by:

- Annual department reviews, which will include reflections on how effectively we are implementing our child safe program.
- Seeking student, parent and teacher feedback in relation to the effectiveness of the child safe program.

4.11. Documenting policies and procedures

Luther College ensures the expectations and clear for leaders, staff and volunteers in complying with and implementing child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures by documenting and making available its policies and procedures for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children. We support this by:

- Making public statements about the importance of child safety
- Making child safety visible through regular discussions, website, posters, Omnia news, online stories and Principal's Page
- Ensuring all staff understand how child safety issues are managed and are familiar with policies
- Regularly discussing child safety in staff briefings and meetings
- Ensuring relevant policies are in place and available to everyone who needs them
- Putting policies into practice and support staff, volunteers and children to use them
- Making sure relevant child safety training is provided for staff and volunteers
- Talking to children and families about what the college is doing to keep children safe
- Engaging with children about their experiences in the college
- Listening and acting when children have feedback or raise concerns
- Making sure risk management focuses on child safety
- Sharing successes and acknowledging good child safe practices and initiatives

Supporting Legislation

- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) (including Child Safe Standards)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) (including reporting to Child Protection)
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) (including Failure to Protect and Failure to Disclose offences)
- *Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic) (including Part XIII – Organisational liability for child abuse)*

Related Programs, Policies and Procedures

- Child Safety Program
    - Child Safety Adult Code of Conduct
    - Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Guidelines
    - Child Safety Officers
    - Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Allegations of Child Abuse
    - Incident Report Template
- Acceptable Use of Technology Agreement
- Positive Workplace Policy and Procedure
- Safe Place Guidelines for Schools of the LCA
- Staff Professional Code of Conduct
- Student Welfare Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Human Resources Program
    - Recruitment & Selection Procedures
    - Induction Procedures
    - Child Safety Staff Training
- Risk Management Program
- Compliance Program

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