

Purpose

It is the policy of Melbourne Grammar School that the learning and working environment is safe for all children in the School's care. The purpose of this policy is to outline the School's commitment to child safety whenever children are in the School's care.

This policy has been framed in response to Ministerial Order 870.

In accordance with Melbourne Grammar School's governance structure, the School's governing body assigns the responsibility for the discharge of this policy to the Headmaster.

Definitions

A **Child** means any student enrolled at MGS.

Child connected work means work authorised by the MGS governing body and performed by an adult in the School environment where children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child Abuse includes any act committed against a child involving:

- A sexual offence
- A grooming offence
- The infliction on a child of physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm or serious neglect.

Child Abuse includes but is not limited to Child Sexual Abuse.

Child Safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

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

- a campus of the School
- online School environments (including email and intranet systems), and
- 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 School events).

School staff means an individual member of staff working for MGS who is:

- directly engaged or employed by the School's governing body
- a volunteer
- contracted service provider (whether or not they are employed through a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)
- a minister of religion.

Introduction – Melbourne Grammar School’s commitment to child safety

Melbourne Grammar School:

- is committed to child safety
- is committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all of its students
- will not tolerate child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our policies and procedures
- has legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we have reasonable concerns about a child’s safety, which we follow rigorously
- is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and/or removing and reducing these risks
- has comprehensive human resources and recruitment policies and practices for all staff
- supports and respects all of its students. The School is committed to the cultural safety of Indigenous students, the cultural safety of students from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for students with disabilities
- has specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, and staff, to achieve these child safety commitments.

Our students

This policy is intended to empower our students.

We promote diversity and tolerance in the School, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular the School:

- promotes the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Indigenous children
- promotes the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensures that children with disabilities or who are vulnerable are safe and can participate equally.

Our staff

This policy is also intended to empower our Staff. The School’s Child Safe Code of Conduct and Child Safe Procedures provides a guide for staff on how to behave with children in Melbourne Grammar School.

All School staff members must agree to abide by the School’s Child Safe Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

Education and Awareness

Education and ongoing awareness is important to ensure that all people within Melbourne Grammar School understands that child safety is everyone’s responsibility.

Melbourne Grammar School aims for all staff (in addition to parents/guardians and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

The School educates and assists its staff to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse. The School also supports its staff through ongoing professional development to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; promote the cultural safety of Indigenous children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

Additionally, new staff will be provided at induction with information to ensure they understand the School's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to the School's Child Safe Code of Conduct). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported as per the School's Child Safe Procedures.

Recruitment

Melbourne Grammar School takes all reasonable steps to employ skilled and qualified people to work with students. The School develops selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate the School's commitment to child safety and an awareness of the School's social and legislative responsibilities.

The School understands that when recruiting staff, contractors and volunteers, there are ethical as well as legislative obligations with respect to child safety. All staff engaged in child-related work adhere to legislative guidelines in terms of holding VIT registration or a Working with Children Check and can provide documentary evidence of this Check.

The School carries out reference checks on prospective employees to ensure that we are recruiting appropriately with respect to qualifications and child safety.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will be dealt with in accordance with the School's Privacy Policy and applicable legislation.

Legislative responsibilities

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in the School will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- All members of staff who are designated **mandatory notifiers** must comply with their duties under the applicable legislation.

Risk management

Melbourne Grammar School has risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks.

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed every year and following significant incidents of child abuse if they occur.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Melbourne Grammar School takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. The School's staff are aware of the policy and procedures to deal appropriately with allegations.

The School works to ensure all students, families, and staff know what to do as per the School's Child Safety Procedures if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

All members of the School community, have a responsibility to report an allegation of child abuse as per the School's Child Safe Procedures.

If an adult has a reasonable belief that a child abuse incident has occurred then they must report the incident as per the School's Child Safe procedures. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

Procedures for Reporting and Responding

Procedures for reporting and responding are outlined in the School's Child Safe Procedures document.

Applicable Legislation

The legislation relevant to the concepts discussed in this policy includes:

- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
- Crimes Act Amendment (Protection of Children) 2014
- Working with Children Act 2005
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005

Related MGS Policies and Documents

- Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Policy
- Protection of Children from Sexual Abuse
- Child Safe Procedures
- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Privacy Policy
- Bullying, Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Discrimination
- Protection of Children from Sexual Abuse
- Social Media Policy
- Student Passenger Policy

Breaches of this Policy

The School expects that any School staff member who becomes aware of a breach of these instructions and policy by another School staff member will advise the relevant Head of School, Deputy Headmaster/Head of Senior School or the Headmaster without delay. The School will consider each breach of these procedures in the context in which it has occurred and will determine if the matter is a minor breach or a serious breach. In the case of School employees, a serious breach may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. In relation to volunteers and contracted service providers, a breach may result in the termination of the person's engagement with MGS and the withdrawal of permission for them to be on the School premises.

Further Information

Further information concerning any aspect of this policy may be directed to the Headmaster or Deputy Headmaster.