



*'Achieving Excellence'*

## FAIRHILLS HIGH SCHOOL

### CHILD SAFE POLICY

Ratified: 17/08/16

## POLICY

Fairhills High School is committed to promoting and protecting the interests, wellbeing and safety of all children. We have a zero tolerance for any form of child abuse.

Everyone working at Fairhills High School and within the school environment is responsible for the care and protection of children and for immediately reporting information about child abuse.

See **Appendix 1- "What is Child Abuse?"** for an outline of what constitutes child abuse.

## PURPOSE

This policy sets out the school's approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe; and provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards (as outlined in **Ministerial Order No. 870 – Child Safe Standards - Managing the risk of child abuse in schools**. The order provides relevant definitions of key terms.)

The purpose of this policy is

1. To facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within Fairhills High School.
2. To clearly develop and maintain an organisational culture of child safety.
3. To make a clear statement to all staff, volunteers, contractors and the entire school community that any form of child abuse will not be tolerated
4. To ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs.
5. To provide guidance to all staff or volunteers (including partner organisations that work with our children), and the whole school community, as to the expected behaviours (see **Appendix 2 - "Child Safe Code of Conduct"**) and the action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of Fairhills High School.
6. To provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

## GUIDELINES

- 1.1 Fairhills High School is committed to promoting, and protecting at all times, the best interests of all children involved in our programs.
- 1.2 Fairhills High School supports and respects all children, staff and volunteers. Our school is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.
- 1.3 All children regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background have equal rights to protection from abuse.
- 1.4 Fairhills High School is committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. We value the opinions of our students and will use their opinions to develop our child protection policies. The school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with our students and their parents/carers. We encourage student and parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capacity of all to understand their rights and their responsibilities.

- 1.5 Everyone working or volunteering at Fairhills High School is responsible for the safety and protection of the children within our care and for reporting information about any suspected child abuse. All staff will understand their legal and moral obligations to contact appropriate authorities when they have concerns about a child's safety. All staff are encouraged to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden. Fairhills High School has clear expectations for all staff and volunteers to make a report about any child or young person who may be in need of protection. Immediate action should include reporting their concerns to the Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection unit or another appropriate agency, and notifying the Principal, Assistant Principal or the Student Wellbeing Coordinator, of their concerns and the reasons for these concerns. The School will take action to respond to any such concern or complaint.
- 1.6 When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct with, or abuse of, a child the school will listen to the complainant's account of the issue and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (or their parents/cares) informed about actions and progress. The **Child Safe Incident Report Form** will be used to record details of any complaint. Fairhills High School collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law. The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the school Privacy Policy.
- 1.7 The Principal team and school leaders will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and the behaviours expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. We are committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks. All staff are expected to regularly undertake the Mandatory Reporting eModule.
- 1.8 Fairhills High School will follow robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers. The school applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with our students. We will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. All prospective staff and volunteers are required to undergo a "National Criminal History Records" check, and maintain a valid "Working With Children" check. Refer to **Staff Selection and Recruitment Guidelines relating to Child Safety**.
- 1.9 The school's **Child Safe Code of Conduct** makes clear the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour for all staff. The policy applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors and whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people. An understanding and awareness of these obligations regarding child safety will be acknowledged by signing the **Child Safe Code of Conduct**.
- 1.10 At Fairhills High School we believe the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and that vigilance is required in ensuring proper risk management processes. The school recognises there are potential risks to students and will take a risk management approach by reviewing programs and processes, and undertaking appropriate preventative measures.
- 1.11 To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework every two years. Each review will include input from students, parent/carers and the school community.

#### **Relevant Documents and Information –**

- **Ministerial Order No. 870** – Child Safe Standards - Managing the risk of child abuse in schools.
- **Appendix 1 "What is Child Abuse?"**
- **Appendix 2 "Child Safe Code of Conduct"**.
- **Staff Selection and Recruitment Guidelines relating to Child Safety**
- **Fairhills High School Privacy Policy.**
- **Fairhills High School Child Safe Incident Report Form.**
- **Fairhills High School Risk Reduction and Management Policy.**
- **Duty of Care guidelines** – refer to <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/dutyofcare.aspx>
- **Child Protection Reporting Obligations** – refer to <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/childprotection.aspx>



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## FAIRHILLS HIGH SCHOOL

### APPENDIX 1 – WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Revised : 19/03/16

#### **What is child abuse?**

The child safe standards aim to protect children from abuse in organisations. Under the Act, child abuse includes five categories of abuse as outlined below.<sup>1</sup>

While the standards apply specifically to child abuse, organisations should look to promote children's health and wellbeing in a broader sense.

#### **Physical violence**

Physical violence occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from a non-accidental injury or injuries inflicted by another person. Physical violence can be inflicted in many ways, including beating, shaking, burning or use of weapons (such as, belts and paddles).

Possible physical indicators:

- Unexplained bruises
- Burns and/or fractured bones

Possible behavioural indicators:

- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Wearing long sleeved clothes on hot days (to hide bruising or other injury)
- Fear of specific people
- Unexplained absences
- Academic problems

#### **Sexual offences**

Sexual offences occur when a person involves the child in sexual activity, or deliberately puts the child in the presence of sexual behaviours that are exploitative or inappropriate to his/her age and development. Child sexual abuse can involve a range of sexual activity including fondling, masturbation, penetration, voyeurism and exhibitionism. It can also include exposure to or exploitation through pornography or prostitution, as well as grooming behaviour.<sup>2</sup>

Possible physical indicators:

- Presence of sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy
- Vaginal or anal bleeding or discharge

Possible behavioural indicators:

- Displaying sexual behaviour or knowledge that is unusual for the child's age
- Difficulty sleeping
- Being withdrawn
- Complaining of headaches or stomach pains

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<sup>1</sup> These definitions are based on the Victorian *Child Protection Practice Manual*: <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/practice-context/child-protection-program-overview/1008-abuse-and-harm-legal-and-practice-definitions](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/practice-context/child-protection-program-overview/1008-abuse-and-harm-legal-and-practice-definitions)>

<sup>2</sup> A new grooming offence commenced in Victoria on 9 April 2014. Further information is available on the [Department of Justice website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/grooming+offence) <[www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/grooming+offence](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/grooming+offence)>

- Fear of specific people
- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Displaying aggressive behaviour

### **Serious emotional or psychological abuse**

Serious emotional or psychological abuse occurs when harm is inflicted on a child through repeated rejection, isolation, or by threats or violence. It can include derogatory name-calling and put-downs, or persistent and deliberate coldness from a person, to the extent where the behaviour of the child is disturbed or their emotional development is at serious risk of being impaired. Serious emotional or psychological abuse could also result from conduct that exploits a child without necessarily being criminal, such as encouraging a child to engage in inappropriate or risky behaviours.

Possible physical indicators:

- Delays in emotional, mental, or even physical development
- Physical signs of self-harming

Possible behavioural indicators:

- Exhibiting low self-esteem
- Exhibiting high anxiety
- Displaying aggressive or demanding behaviour
- Being withdrawn, passive and/or tearful
- Self-harming

### **Serious neglect**

Serious neglect is the continued failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention or adequate supervision, to the extent that the child's health, safety and/or development is, or is likely to be, jeopardised. Serious neglect can also occur if an adult fails to adequately ensure the safety of a child where the child is exposed to extremely dangerous or life threatening situations.

Possible physical indicators:

- Frequent hunger
- Malnutrition
- Poor hygiene
- Inappropriate clothing

Possible behavioural indicators:

- Stealing food
- Staying at school outside of school hours
- Aggressive behaviour
- Misusing alcohol or drugs
- Academic issues

**Call the police on 000 if you have immediate concerns for a child's safety.**

Information about child protection services can be found on the [Department of Health and Human Services website](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/crisis-and-emergency/reporting-child-abuse) <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/crisis-and-emergency/reporting-child-abuse](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/crisis-and-emergency/reporting-child-abuse)>



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## FAIRHILLS HIGH SCHOOL

### CHILD SAFE CODE OF CONDUCT

Ratified: 17/08/16

Modified: 18/4/17

Fairhills High School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of, and responsibility for ensuring the school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment which respects and fosters dignity and self-esteem of students, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development.

This Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations. It is intended to compliment child protection legislation, Department policy, school policies and procedures, and professional standards, codes or ethics as these apply to staff, volunteers, contractors and other personnel.

The Principal and Leadership Team at Fairhills High School will support implementation and monitoring of this Code of Conduct, and will plan, implement and monitor arrangements to provide an inclusive, safe and orderly school and broader learning environment. The Principal and Leadership Team will provide support and information to enable this Code of Conduct to operate effectively.

All staff, contractors, volunteers and members of Fairhills High School are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below. The Code of Conduct applies in all school situations, including school camps, excursions, sporting events and the use of digital technology and social media.

#### **All personnel of Fairhills High School are individually responsible for supporting and promoting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:**

- adhering to the child safe policy at all times and upholding the statement of commitment to child safety at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating students and families in the school community with respect, both within the school environment and outside the school environment as part of normal social and community activities.
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal child's self-identification)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination)
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities)
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child
- understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse
- immediately reporting any child safety concerns to DHHS Child Protection or appropriate agency
- reporting any allegations of child abuse or any child safety concerns to the Student Wellbeing Coordinator at Fairhills High School

- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe and protected from harm
- encouraging children to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.

**Staff, volunteers, contractors and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work must not:**

- ignore or disregard any concerns or suspicions of suspected or disclosed child abuse.
- develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
- exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as abusive and not justified by the educational, therapeutic, or service delivery context
- ignore behaviours by other adults towards students when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate
- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)
- do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children
- discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental guidance, delivering the educational curriculum or a therapeutic setting
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity
- have contact with a child or their family outside of our organisation without the Principal's knowledge and/or consent (for example, no babysitting). Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate.
- communicate directly with a student or their families through personal or private contact channels (including social media, email, instant messaging, texting, etc) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to school work, classroom behaviour or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter
- photograph or video a child in a school environment except in accordance with school policy or where required for duty of care purposes
- in the school environment or at other school events where students are present, consume alcohol contrary to school policy, or take illicit drugs under any circumstances

It is expected that all staff, contractors, volunteers and members of Fairhills High School will fully adhere to this Code of Conduct.

By observing these standards it is acknowledged that all members of the school community have a responsibility to immediately report any breach of this Code to the Principal, Harvey Wood (or appropriate delegate of the Principal).