

## Child Protection Program

### Purpose and Scope

The Knox School Child Protection Program consists of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that maintain a child safe environment and embed an organisational culture of child safety within the School community. The Program specifically addresses issues of child protection and is designed to ensure compliance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards and related child protection laws.

This policy provides the framework for:

- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child protection within the School;
- the creation of a positive child protection culture;
- the promotion and open discussion of child protection issues within the School; and
- complying with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection in Victoria.

### Responsibilities

Child protection is everyone's responsibility. At The Knox School all members of the School Board and staff, as well as Direct Contact Volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. Specific responsibilities include:

#### The Knox School Board

Each member of the School Board is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the School's Child Protection and Safety Policy and the Child Protection Program to be effectively implemented within the School and are responsible for holding the Principal and executive team accountable for effective implementation.

#### The Principal

The School Board delegates day-to-day management of the School to the Principal.

The Principal is ultimately responsible for, and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that:

- the School's Child Protection and Safety Policy and Child Protection Program are implemented effectively with available resources effectively deployed;
- appropriate Child Protection Officers are appointed and trained;
- a strong and sustainable child protection culture is maintained within the School;
- any child protection incidents arising are dealt with professionally and in a timely manner;
- The Board of Directors receives regular reports with respect to child protection matters; and
- the School is complying with its legal and regulatory obligations with respect to child protection.

#### The Vice Principal

The Knox School's Child Protection Program will be implemented by the Wellbeing Committee under the direction of the Vice Principal. The Vice Principal is responsible for the scheduling and co-ordination of briefings, information sessions and meetings for the education, implementation and comprehension of the Child Protection Program.

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## Child Protection Officers

A number of senior staff members are nominated as Child Protection Officers. Child Protection Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child protection issues. They are the first point of contact for raising child protection concerns within the School. They are also responsible for championing child protection within the School and assisting in coordinating responses to child protection incidents.

## Staff Members

All staff are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. 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 with one of the School's Child Protection Officers.

## Direct Contact Volunteers

All Direct Contact Volunteers, as defined in this policy, are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Safety Code of Conduct and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse.

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 with one of the School's Child Protection Officers.

## Authorities

The Child Protection Program is implemented on a day-to-day basis by the Wellbeing Committee under the auspices of the School Executive. The Board of The Knox School oversees the child protection program.

## Compliance

The Knox School's Child Protection Program complies with the Victorian Child Safe Standards and the School's and its employees' common law obligations.

## The Victorian Child Safe Standards

The Victorian Child Safe Standards comprise seven (7) standards and three (3) principles.

The seven (7) standards are as follows:

- Standard 1:** Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements.
- Standard 2:** A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety.
- Standard 3:** A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.
- Standard 4:** Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel.
- Standard 5:** Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.
- Standard 6:** Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse.
- Standard 7:** Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

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In addition to the seven (7) Standards, the School is required to take into consideration the following three (3) principles as part of our response to each Standard:

**Principle 1:** promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children;

**Principle 2:** promoting the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds; and

**Principle 3:** promoting the safety of children with a disability.

### **The Children, Youth and Families Act (2005)**

The Children, Youth and Families Act has many functions including:

- establishing the “child’s best interests” principle;
- regulation of community services and care providers;
- the management of child protection responses;
- children in need of therapeutic treatment if exhibiting sexually inappropriate behaviour; and
- promoting stability in care arrangements.

For the purpose of our Child Protection Program the Children, Youth and Families Act is important because it establishes obligations with respect to Mandatory Reporting.

### **The Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005)**

The Child Wellbeing and Safety Act is a companion piece of legislation to the Children Youth and Families Act.

Its primary function is to provide for the establishment of various government bodies that oversee the Victorian child and family services system.

For the purpose of our Child Protection Program, the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act is important for two reasons:

- it provides the Statutory Definition of Child Abuse; and
- it is the Act through which the Victorian Child Safe Standards are created.

### **The Education and Training Reform Act (2006)**

From a child safety perspective the key functions of the Education and Training Reform Act are to:

- require schools to notify the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) when a school has taken action against a teacher; and
- make compliance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards a requirement for registration of all Victorian schools.

### **The Working with Children Act (2005)**

The Working with Children Act establishes a framework to screen the criminal records and the professional conduct of people who intend to work with or care for children.

People who are assessed as posing an unjustifiable risk to the safety of children will fail the Working with Children Check and the Act prohibits these people from working with children.

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## The Crimes Act (1958)

The Crimes Act in Victoria sets out a number of child protection related offences including those relating to indecent acts and persistent sexual abuse.

Of key relevance to the Victorian child protection framework are the offences of:

- Grooming - which targets predatory conduct designed to facilitate later sexual activity with a child.
- Failure to Protect a Child - which requires people in authority within a school to take action to protect children where they know that a person associated with the school poses a substantial risk of sexually abusing a child.
- Failure to Disclose – which applies to all adults, not just professionals who work with children, and requires them to report to Police where they hold a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child in Victoria.

## The Family Violence Protection Act (2008)

The Family Violence Protection Act is designed to ensure safety for children and adults who have experienced family violence and forms a key part of the overall legal and regulatory framework for child protection in Victoria.

Critically the Act provides an extensive definition of “family violence” that includes behaviour that causes a child to hear or witness, or be exposed to the effects of such behaviour.

## Definitions

**Victorian Child Safe Standards:** A set of standards introduced in 2016 through Ministerial Order 870 in wake of the findings from the Victorian Betrayal of Trust Inquiry.

**Child Protection Officer:** A number of senior staff members are nominated as Child Protection Officers. Child Protection Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child protection issues. They are the first point of contact for raising child protection concerns within the School. They are also responsible for championing child protection within the School and assisting in coordinating responses to child protection incidents.

**Child Protection Program:** The Knox School’s Child Protection Program relates to all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse.

**Child Protection and Safety Policy:** This policy is an overarching document that articulates The Knox School’s approach to protecting children from child abuse.

**Child abuse:** Child abuse is defined in section 3 of the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) as including:

- any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or a grooming offence listed in the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic);
- the infliction of physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- the serious neglect of a child.

child is defined by the Act as a person who is under the age of 18 years.

**Code of Conduct:** The Knox School’s Child Safety Code of Conduct establishes acceptable and unacceptable behaviours by members of the School community. It creates professional boundaries for employees of the School, ethical behaviour and the parameters of acceptable and unacceptable relationships.

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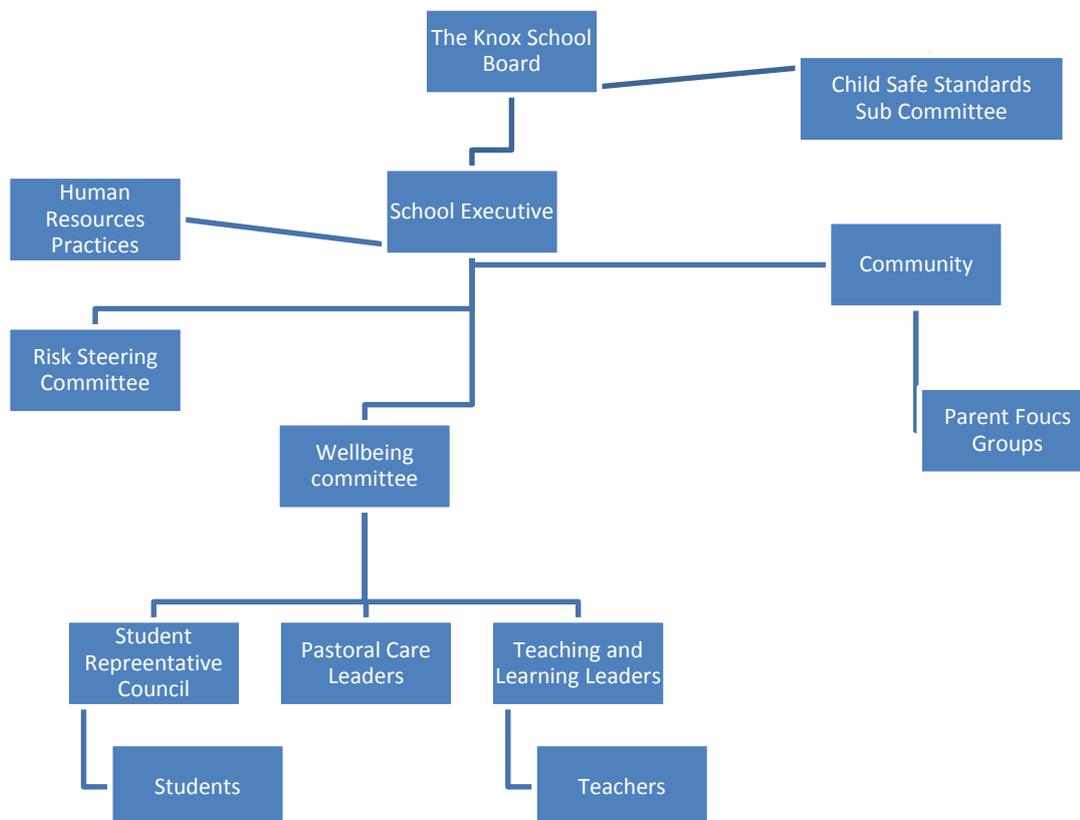
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**Staff:** Including all teaching and non-teaching staff (including casual and relief staff) as well as all volunteers who could potentially have direct unsupervised contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service (including sport coaches, contract cleaners, grounds staff and maintenance workers) ('Direct Contact Volunteers').

## Policy



The Wellbeing Committee is charged with implementing, maintaining and cultivating the culture of child safety throughout The Knox School. Two-way communication exists between each of the groups identified above to create and feed the culture of child safety. The Wellbeing Committee's statement of purpose identifies its formal and operational relationships with each of the groups identified in the diagram.

The Knox School complies with the Child Safe Standards through the following means:

**Standard One** - Organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements

- the development of this Child Protection Program, our Child Protection and Safety Policy and Child Safety Code Of Conduct
- the appointment of senior staff members as Child Protection Officers who act as "Child Protection Champions" and are tasked with the overall responsibility for embedding an organisational culture of child protection in the School
- each staff member and Direct Contact Volunteer having to complete Child Protection Training which provides information with respect to key risk indicators of child abuse and reporting procedures
- establishing clear guidelines for reporting child abuse concerns; and
- creating an environment supportive of children from culturally diverse backgrounds and children with disabilities.

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**Standard Two** - A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety

The Knox School has developed and implemented a Child Protection and Safety Policy that describes the key elements of our approach to child protection as well as an overarching set of principles guiding the development of policies and procedures to protect children from child abuse.

Our Child Protection and Safety Policy is published through various media including our public website.

**Standard Three** - A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children

The Knox School has created a plain English Child Safety Code of Conduct which specifies appropriate standards of behaviour for adults towards students in all School environments, including outside of school hours.

**Standard Four** - Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel

The Knox School has created child safe human resources practices including those relating to:

- Recruitment, Selection & Screening
- Our Working with Children Check Policy
- Child Protection Training
- Cultural Awareness of Child Protection Issues

**Standard Five** - Procedures for responding and reporting suspected child abuse

The Knox School has established simple and accessible procedures for staff and volunteers to report a child abuse concern internally to one of our Child Protection Officers.

Reporting procedures for parents and other community members are included in our Child Protection and Safety Policy which is available on our public website.

Age appropriate reporting procedures for students are developed through our wellbeing and pastoral care program.

The Knox School has developed and implemented procedures for responding to allegations and disclosures of child abuse, or suspected child abuse.

**Standard Six** - Strategies to identify and reduce or remove the risk of abuse

The School has adopted a risk management approach to child safety. Key risk indicators of child abuse are documented in our Child Protection Program and also included in our Child Protection Training.

The School has developed a number of strategies, policies and procedures to create a risk-based approach to child safety and protection. Refer to Child Protection Risk Management.

**Standard Seven** - Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children

The Knox School has developed strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children including policies and procedures related to age appropriate pastoral care and supporting children with disabilities and children from culturally diverse backgrounds.

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## Principles

### Principle of Inclusion

In addition to implementing the Standards, the School implements principles of inclusion prescribed by the Standards and Ministerial Order 870 through creating culturally, disability and socially inclusive policy.

The Knox School is committed to ensuring that the needs of all students including but not limited to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds and students with disabilities or who are vulnerable are taken into account when the School develops and implements its Child Protection Program.

We understand that allegations of abuse that involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from diverse backgrounds or children with disabilities will require varied and particular responses to ensure that appropriate action is taken. The School provides training for all of its Child Protection Officers that specifically covers how to make a culturally appropriate and sensitive response to allegation of abuse in order to overcome any impairments or barriers culturally diverse students or students with a disability may face.

## Procedure

The implementation of the Child Protection Program occurs throughout the School daily. Awareness of the School's culture of child safety is fostered by:

Level	Education Provided	Category
<b>B</b>	Annual review cycle	Board of Directors (Governance)
<b>1</b>	Face-to-face, periodic instruction, annual review	Teaching staff, non-teaching staff with regular student interaction (defined as non-teaching staff on site daily)
<b>2</b>	Virtual, periodic instruction, annual, statement of commitment	Casual employees, sporting coaches, cleaners, music peripatetic staff, canteen staff, bus drivers, before and after school care providers
<b>3</b>	The Knox School Culture of Child Safety summary	Direct contract volunteers, extended term contractors, CRT teachers, visitors
<b>4</b>	Statement of culture	External, out of school hours contractors

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## Associated Documents

The Child Protection Program is an overarching document informed by and contributing to the following internal policies, documents and practices:

- Duty of Care – Crimes Act 1958 Vic Policy
- Mandatory Reporting
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Child Protection and Safety Policy
- Child Abuse Response Plan
- Staff and Student Appropriate Conduct Policy
- Human Resources practices

## Further Information

The Knox School is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Protection Program. The Program is regularly reviewed for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child protection related laws, regulations and standards. The Child Protection Program, its maintenance and implementation, provides the Wellbeing Committee with its operational framework.

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