



## CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY

### Statement of Context and Purpose

The welfare of each child and young person (collectively, students) studying at Huntingtower is the school's paramount concern. Huntingtower has a zero-tolerance policy for child abuse and is committed to promoting child safety.

The Huntingtower Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates the School's commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where students are safe and feel safe.

This Policy provides an overview of the School's approach to implementing Ministerial Order No. 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises (Ministerial Order No. 1359), which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

It informs our school community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and young people and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

### Application

This policy:

- Applies to all school staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to school Board members where indicated.
- Applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided by for a student's use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers
- Should be read together with Huntingtower's other Child Safety and Wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related school policies section below

### Child Safe Values and Principles

Huntingtower is committed to providing a nurturing school environment where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all students.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our school environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Huntingtower will promote the inherent dignity of all students and their fundamental right to be respected and nurtured in a safe school environment. Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Huntingtower will strive for continual improvement that is responsive to emerging thinking, evidence and practice, so as to eliminate the possibility of inappropriate behaviour that may compromise child safety or student wellbeing from occurring in the first place. We will regularly seek input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

Everyone employed or volunteering at Huntingtower has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure a child safe culture in which the wellbeing and safety of all students is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make (CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety).

The School has allocated roles and responsibilities for child safety and wellbeing as follows:

### **Principal and School Executive Team**

The Principal and School Executive Team (comprising of the Principal, Vice/Deputy Principals, Heads of School and Director of Business Operations) are responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order No. 1359.

The Principal and members of the School Executive Team will:

- Ensure that effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed
- Model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families, and school staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing
- Enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered
- Reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students
- Promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the school community including at Executive team meetings and staff meetings
- Ensure risk management strategies are documented and in place that focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks related to child safety and wellbeing in the School
- Facilitate and maintain records of regular professional learning for school staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and the prevention of, and responding to, abuse
- Create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

### **School Staff, Contractors and Volunteers**

All school staff, contractors and volunteers will:

- Participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the School and always follow the School Child Safety and Wellbeing policies and procedures
- Act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safe Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy
- Ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives
- Implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students

### **School Board**

In performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, School Board members will:

- Promote a child safe culture with the broader school community
- Ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at School Board meetings
- Undertake annual training on child safety provided by the School
- Provide feedback in relation to, and act in accordance with, the School Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to Board members
- When participating in the selection process of the Principal, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe.

### **Specific staff child safety responsibilities**

The School Principal and nominated Child Protection Officers (CPO's) are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents

Posters displaying information about the CPO's have been placed around the school. The responsibilities of the CPO's are outlined in the Guidelines for Child Protection Officers.

A Child Safe committee has been formed to monitor the School's compliance with its Child Safety policies and procedures. The Committee also monitors the Child Safety Risk Register on a regular basis.

The Principal is responsible for informing the school community about this policy and making it publicly available.

Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy, and Child Safety Risk Register.

### **Child Safety Code of Conduct**

The [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#) sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are acceptable and not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

The School ensures that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable behaviour so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the School.

The Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and Guidelines also includes processes to report inappropriate student behaviour.

## Managing Risks to Child Safety and Wellbeing

Huntingtower will systematically and continually identify and assess risks and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in the physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site overnight camps, activities and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to mitigate those risks. The Child Safety Committee will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least once a term.

## Establishing a Culturally Safe Environment

Huntingtower is committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school environment where the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's histories, cultures, values, and practices are respected and celebrated.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students we recognise the link between the student's culture, identity and their cultural safety and work to ensure they feel comfortable being themselves and expressing their spiritual and cultural beliefs.

The School has in place the various strategies to promote and maintain a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families. These strategies and actions are listed in the Huntingtower Indigenous Connections Action Plan and in the Huntingtower Child Safety Action Plan.

## Student Voice and Empowerment

To support child safety and wellbeing at Huntingtower we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the School to ensure a sense of belonging through implementing our whole school approach to respectful relationships and school values.

The curriculum design integrates appropriate knowledge and skills to enhance students' understanding of being safe, as well as their understanding of their rights to safety, information and participation. Teaching and learning strategies that acknowledge and support student agency and voice are implemented.

We have developed appropriate education about:

- standards of behaviour for students attending our school
- Healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality)
- Resilience
- Child abuse awareness and prevention

We have also developed curriculum planning documents that detail the strategies and actions the School takes to implement its obligations to ensure that:

- Students are informed about all of their rights, including to safety, information and participation
- The importance of friendship is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, to help students feel safe and be less isolated
- Staff and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for students to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns
- We have strategies in place to develop a culture that facilitates participation and is responsive to the input of students
- We provide opportunities for students to participate and is responsive to their contributions to strengthen confidence and engagement

Student voice is also promoted in a variety of forums as detailed in the Huntingtower Child Safe Standards Action Plan.

## Family Engagement

Huntingtower families and the school community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, Huntingtower is committed to providing families and community with accessible information about the School's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing. We aim to ensure that:

- Families participate in decisions relating to child safety and wellbeing which affect their child
- We engage and openly communicate with families, carers and other members of the School community about our child safe approach
- All members of the School community have access to information relating to child safety and wellbeing
- Families, carers and other members of the School community have the opportunity to provide input into the development and review of the School's child safety and wellbeing policies and practices
- Families, carers and other members of the School community are informed about the operations and governance of the School in relation to child safety and wellbeing

The Huntingtower Child Safe Standards Action Plan identifies the School's strategy for engaging families in the ongoing review and updating of the School's Child Safe Policies.

## Diversity and Equity

As a child safe organisation, Huntingtower celebrates the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every student has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on. We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of students in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports the needs of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- Children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Children and young people with disability
- Children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- International students
- Children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+

The Huntingtower Child Safe Standards Action Plan provides information about the measures the School has in place to support diversity and equity, including reference to the School's Student Gender Diversity Policy and procedures.

## **Screening School Staff and Volunteers**

Huntingtower applies vigorous child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all school staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

Each job description for staff involved in child-connected work has a clear statement that sets out the requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety and wellbeing for those in that role and the occupant's essential qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety and wellbeing.

When recruiting school staff, we follow the Huntingtower Staff Recruitment Policy and associated guidelines. When engaging school staff to perform child-related work, we:

- Ensure Child Safety is a key focus in the selection and employment process
- Sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance (WWCC), Criminal Check evidence or equivalent background check such as a Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration
  - Collect and record:
  - Proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
  - The person's history of working with children
  - References that address suitability for the position and working with children

### **School staff induction**

All newly appointed school staff will be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program in accordance with the Staff Recruitment Policy.

### **Ongoing supervision and management of school staff**

All school staff engaged in child-connected work are supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. Where it is not practical or desirable for school staff such as teachers to be directly supervised in their classrooms, the School has strategies in place to provide support and supervision of these school staff.

School staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continued suitability for child-connected work. This will be done by tracking compliance with key training requirements and seeking involvement of staff in annual reflections on the impact of their practice on the safety and wellbeing of students.

Inappropriate behaviour towards students will be managed promptly and in accordance with our school policies and legal obligations.

### **Suitability of volunteers**

All volunteers are required to comply with the Volunteers Policy which describes how the School must assess the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing induction and training, and supervision and management.

## Child Safety Knowledge, Skills and Awareness

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that school staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters. In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our school staff participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

School staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- The School's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices
- Completing the [Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#) online module annually
- Recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other students
- Responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- How to build culturally safe environments for students
- Information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
- How to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing, for example, training for volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

### School Board training and education

To ensure the School Board is equipped with the knowledge required to support the Principal in making decisions in the best interests of student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment, the School Board is trained at least annually. Training includes guidance on:

- Individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse
- Child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment
- Huntingtower's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices

## Concerns and Reporting Processes

Huntingtower fosters a culture that encourages school staff, volunteers, students, parents, guardians, carers, and the School community to raise concerns in relation to Child Safety. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

Huntingtower has clear pathways for raising concerns and responding and this is documented in the Schools [Child Safety Identifying, Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy](#) and the Reportable Conduct Policy.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all school staff and volunteers (including the School Board) must follow the policies to address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the School.

The School uses [PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to Abuse – Reporting obligations](#), to set out the actions required under the relevant legislation when there is a reasonable belief that a student at the school is in need of protection, or a criminal offence has been committed and provides guidance and procedures on how to make a report.

Huntingtower is a prescribed Information Sharing Entity (ISE) meaning that, where legislated requirements are met, it is able to share confidential information with other ISEs to promote child wellbeing or safety under the CISS or FVISS (refer to Child & Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme Policy)

## Communication

Huntingtower is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the School community through:

- Ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on our website
- Displaying (CCYP) child safety messaging around the School – specifically the Four Critical Action Posters
- Regular highlights/updates in bulletins and parent emails on topics relating to child safety and wellbeing
- Ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at the Executive Team meetings, staff meetings and School Board meetings

## Privacy and Information Sharing

Huntingtower collects, uses, and discloses information about students and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws. For information on how our school collects, uses and discloses information refer to the [Privacy Policy](#).

## Records Management

Huntingtower acknowledges that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the Record Management Policy.

## Review of Child Safety Practices

At Huntingtower, the Principal is primarily responsible for monitoring the overall compliance, review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices. The School will:

- Review and improve this policy every two years or after any significant child safety incident. The review will include input from students, parents, carers and the community'
- Provide delegated school staff with the direction, support and resources necessary to fulfil policy requirements
- Analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice
- Act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community

## Definitions

The following terms in this policy have specific definitions:

- child
- child safety
- child abuse
- child-connected work
- child-related work
- school environment
- school staff
- school governing authority
- student
- volunteer



## Related documents

- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations
- Reportable Conduct Policy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Student Wellbeing and Responsible Engagement Policy
- Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme Policy

## Other related documents and legislation

- Ministerial Order No. 1359, Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Facilities
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Sentencing Act 1991 (Vic)
- Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)

## Communication

This Policy will be available on the School website. In addition, relevant aspects of this Policy will be raised in staff, student and parent meetings.

## Evaluation

The Principal is primarily responsible for monitoring Huntingtower's overall compliance with this Policy, which will be reviewed as part of Huntingtower's policy review cycle (and otherwise as and when required).

## Authorisation

This policy was authorised by the Board in September 2022

Date of next review: September 2024