

## ASHWOOD HIGH SCHOOL CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

### **Purpose:**

The child safe environments 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.

### **Scope**

These principles apply to all staff, volunteers, contractors and whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people and across a range of school forums (eg. Camps, online) and outside of school hours.

### **Statement of Commitment & Principles:**

*Ashwood High School is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.*

*Ashwood High School has zero tolerance for child abuse.*

*Ashwood High School is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.*

*Every person involved at Ashwood High School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.*

In its planning, decision-making and operations *Ashwood High School* will:

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children

4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
7. Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues;
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

### **Policy and procedures**

Policies and procedures outlining school's approach to the Child Safe Standards are outlined below. Should you require further information, please contact the Assistant Principal or the Student Services Manager at the school on 9807 1333.

#### A child-safe culture:

The school's culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

Further information on the the school's plan for creating child safe culture can be found at the following school policies:

- Ashwood High School Code of Conduct
- Ashwood High School Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy
- Ashwood High School Philosophy Policy
- Ashwood High School Onsite Supervision of Students Policy
- Ashwood High School Duty of Care Policy
- Ashwood High School Camps Policy & Procedures
- Ashwood High School Mandatory Reporting Policy

#### Personnel understand their roles and responsibilities/ Code of conduct

School leaders and managers will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's Code of Conduct.

#### Human resources practices and training

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 children. 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 National Criminal History Records check and maintain a valid Working with Children Check.

Further information on the school's plan for creating child safe culture can be found at the following school policies:

- Ashwood High School Organisation Structure
- Ashwood High School Role Descriptions & Duty Statements
- Ashwood High School Staff Information Registers Policy
- Ashwood High School Criminal Records Check Policy

#### Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

"The school has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. Immediate action should include reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection or another appropriate agency and notifying the principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns. The school will take action to respond to a complaint.

Further information on the school's plan for creating child safe culture can be found at the following school policies:

- Ashwood High School Mandatory Reporting Policy & Procedures
- Ashwood High School Role Critical Incident and Recovery Plan

### Risk reduction and management

The School believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.

Further information on the school's plan for creating child safe culture can be found at the following school policies:

- Ashwood High School Student Engagement & Wellbeing Policy

### Listening to children

The school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/care givers. We encourage child and parent/ care giver involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/care givers to understand their rights and their responsibilities.

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 things and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (or their parent/carer) informed about progress.

Further information on the school's plan for creating child safe culture can be found at the following school policies:

- Ashwood High School Community & Consultation Policy
- Ashwood High School Student Leadership Policy (to be ratified by the end of the 2016 school year)

### Confidentiality and Privacy

Ashwood 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 DET School Privacy Policy.

### **Policy evaluation and review**

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. The review will include input from students, parents and the school community."

### **Definitions**

Ministerial Order 870 provides definitions, including:

**Child abuse** includes—

- any act committed against a child involving:
  - a sexual offence or
  - an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
- the infliction, on a child, of:
  - physical violence or
  - serious emotional or psychological harm
  - serious neglect of a child.

**Child-connected work** means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

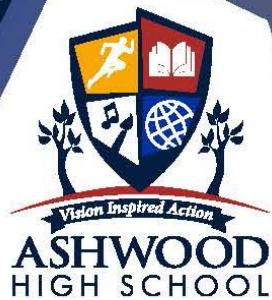
**Child safety** encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

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

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

School staff being: an individual working in a school environment who is:

- directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority; a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary); or
- a minister of religion.



**Related policies and documents:**

DET School Policy & Advisory Guide – Duty of Care

DET School Policy & Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations

DET Child Wellbeing and Safety Framework

DET School Privacy Policy (update expected in June 2016)

<b>Date Implemented</b>	
<b>Author</b>	
<b>Approved By</b>	School Council
<b>Approval Authority (Signature &amp; Date)</b>	Principal: School Council President:
<b>Date Reviewed</b>	
<b>Responsible for Review</b>	Assistant Principal
<b>Review Date</b>	