

Student Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Purpose

Rossbourne School is committed to protecting students from all aspects of harm, and has established strategies, practices, policies and procedures to uphold this public commitment.

All policies, protocols and procedures flow from the School's vision:

To be a world-leading school known for its unique and innovative neurodiverse educational programs where students' potential is unlocked so they can achieve their best as global citizens.

The School takes a zero tolerance approach to any behaviours that jeopardise student safety and wellbeing (including child abuse and reportable conduct). The School regards student safety and wellbeing responsibilities with the utmost importance as it delivers personalised educational programs and curriculum that promotes the School's values of Respect, Honesty, Sharing, Resilience and Inclusion.

In addition, the School has a pastoral, moral and legal responsibility to create an inextricable connection between student safety and learning, especially in a personalised learning environment where the School discovers what motivates and inspires its students, and focuses on their strengths and ambitions.

In a specialised neurodiverse educational context, the School is committed to approaches that protect dignity, avoid shame, and recognise behaviour, communication and regulation needs as part of safe and inclusive practice.

This connection will be the foundation of all decisions made, and actions taken by the School when delivering a quality education to its students. At all times, the ongoing safety of its students will be at the forefront of mind, and the School's paramount consideration.

The School treats seriously its reporting obligations in relation to student safety matters, including to the Social Services Regulator, Child Protection and Victoria Police. The School recognises that whilst reporting obligations may differ depending on a person's position within the School, all staff are required to uphold the ethos of this policy by ensuring that student safety and wellbeing matters are reported internally, and externally where required.

As such, this policy sets out how the School will meet its responsibilities and commitment to student safety and wellbeing, and is a child safety policy made in accordance with Ministerial Order No. 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and Boarding Premises.

Rossbourne School is committed to creating and maintaining a child safe organisation where students are safe and feel safe. We have zero tolerance for child abuse, racism, corporal punishment and other harmful conduct. We value student voice, family partnership and inclusive practice and we are committed to regularly reviewing and improving our child safety practices.

Scope

This policy applies to the Rossbourne School Community including all Board members, the Principal, employees, volunteers, contractors, labour hire workers, secondees and other authorised personnel required to perform functions on the School's premises, or at school-organised activities and events. Collectively, these individuals are referred to as 'staff'.

This policy extends to any other person who is engaged in student-connected work at the School, or that otherwise has direct and regular contact with the School's students (whether supervised or not).

This policy applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including excursions, camps, digital platforms and services provided by third parties.

Student Safety and Wellbeing Definitions

Behaviour that causes emotional or psychological harm to a child	Includes sexual offences, sexual misconduct, physical violence and significant neglect. However, other types of behaviours can also cause emotional or psychological harm including, for example, severe or sustained instances of verbal abuse; coercive or manipulative behaviour; hostility towards, or rejection of, a child; and humiliation, belittling or scapegoating.
Child	Means a child under the age of 18 years, except in the case of certain mandatory reporting obligations which may define a child to be under a different age.
Child abuse	Means all forms of child abuse defined in the ETR Act and includes: - Any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or grooming. - The infliction on a child, of physical violence or serious emotional or psychological harm. - Serious neglect of a child.
CSO	Means a Child Safety Officer.
CWS Act	Means the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic), as amended from time to time.
CYF Act	Means the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic), as amended from time to time.
DFFH	Means the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, which is the department responsible for Child Protection.

ETR Act	Means the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic), as amended from time to time.
Grooming	Is defined in the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) and refers to communication, by words or conduct, between an adult and a child with the intention of facilitating the commission of a sexual offence involving the child. Grooming may be identified by attempts being made at establishing an intimate relationship with, befriending or influencing a child (or, in some circumstances, members of the child's family). In this respect, grooming involves psychological manipulation that is usually very subtle, drawn out, calculated, controlling and premeditated (Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry 2013).
Mandatory reporter	Has the meaning given to it by section 182 of the CYF Act. It includes but is not limited to registered teachers (including early childhood teachers), staff with post-secondary qualifications employed in the care, education or minding of children, school principals, registered nurses, students in training to become teachers (who have been granted permission to teach under relevant legislation), registered psychologists, out of home care workers, early childhood workers and any other person referred to in section 182 of the CYF Act.
Neglect	Refers to an individual's failure to meet their obligations and responsibilities to keep a child safe and well, and can include: Supervisory neglect, which is the absence or inattention of a staff member which places the child at risk of physical harm or injury, sexual abuse or allows other criminal behaviour to occur. Physical neglect, which is the failure to provide basic physical necessities for a child, such as adequate food, clothing, housing or medical attention.
Parent	Includes a guardian or carer, and 'parents' has a corresponding meaning.
Physical violence	Includes an act that causes physical injury or pain. Examples of physical violence can include: • Hitting, kicking and punching. • Pushing, shoving, grabbing, throwing and shaking. • Using an object to hit or strike. • Using inappropriate restraint/excessive force. Physical violence does not include lawful behaviour. For example: • Reasonable steps taken to protect a child from immediate harm, such as taking their arm to stop them from going into oncoming traffic.

	• Medical treatment given in good faith by an appropriately qualified staff member, such as a senior first aid officer administering first aid. Threats of physical violence that do not cause physical injury or pain may still amount to behaviour that causes emotional or psychological harm.
Reasonable belief	Means a belief that would lead a reasonable person in the same position as you, and with the same information as you to form a belief that child abuse (including sexual abuse) or reportable conduct is occurring or may occur. There must be some objective basis for the belief. However, it is not necessary to have proof to form a reasonable belief, nor do you need to make a judgement about the truth of an allegation. However, a reasonable belief is more than suspicion, mere rumour or speculation. For example, a 'reasonable belief' about a sexual offence might be formed when: • A student states that they have been sexually abused. • A student states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (because sometimes the student may be talking about themselves). • Someone who knows a student states that the student has been sexually abused. • Professional observations of the student's behaviour or development lead a professional to form a belief that the student has been sexually abused. • Signs of sexual abuse lead to a belief that the student has been sexually abused. It is permissible to ask a person raising a concern with you, sufficient questions to establish a reasonable belief. However, care should be taken not to ask the person any suggestive or leading questions. Staff who are unsure whether they have formed a reasonable belief must seek advice immediately from a Child Safety Officer, the Principal or a member of the School Executive Team.
Reportable allegation	Means any information that leads a person to form a reasonable belief that an employee has committed reportable conduct, or misconduct that may involve reportable conduct, whether or not the conduct or misconduct that is alleged to have occurred was within the course of the person's employment or engagement with the School. In the above definition, 'employee' has the meaning given in the CWS Act.

Reportable conduct	Means: • A sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child. • Sexual misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence, of a child. • Physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child. • Any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child. • Significant neglect of a child. In the above definition, 'child' has the meaning given in the CWS Act.
School	Means Rossbourne School.
School community	Means all those who are directly and indirectly involved with the School, including students, parents, carers and alumni, as well as businesses, charitable organisations and locals that are affiliated with the School.
School Executive Team	Refers to the Principal, Deputy Principal, Director of Business Operations and Admissions & Community Engagement Coordinator
Sexual misconduct	Includes behaviour, physical contact or speech or other communication of a sexual nature (including inappropriate touching, grooming behaviour and voyeurism). Other examples of sexual misconduct include: • Developing an intimate relationship with a student, for example, through regular contact with the student without the knowledge or approval of the school; • Inappropriately discussing sex and sexuality with a student; or • Other overtly sexual acts that could lead to the school taking disciplinary or other action.
Sexual offence	Means a sexual offence set out in clause 1 of Schedule 1 to the <i>Sentencing Act 1991</i> (Vic), and includes sexual assault (including rape and attempted rape), indecent acts, possession of child abuse material, exposure to pornography, and grooming. Any sexual activity between a child and an adult can be a sexual offence. In certain circumstances, sexual activity between children can also be a sexual offence, and also between two adults (particularly when one is a student).
Significant	In relation to harm or neglect, means that the harm is more than trivial or insignificant, but need not be as high as serious and need not have a lasting permanent effect.

SSR	Means the Social Services Regulator. The Victorian authority responsible for oversight of reportable conduct schemes and ensuring organisations respond appropriately to allegations of misconduct involving children.
SOCIT	Means the Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team.
Staff and staff members	Include Board members, the Principal, employees, volunteers, contractors, labour hire workers, secondees and other authorised personnel required to perform functions on the School's premises, or at school-organised activities and events.
Student	Means a child under 18 years of age, and any student at the School over 18 years of age, and ' students ' has a corresponding meaning.
Student-connected work	Means work authorised by the School and performed by an adult in a school environment while children or young people are present or reasonably expected to be present.
Victimisation	Means treating a person unfairly or unreasonably because they, or someone associated with them, has made, or intends to raise a concern about student safety or student wellbeing, or who is otherwise involved or participates in the School's, or an external body's investigation of the concern.
VIT	Means the Victorian Institute of Teaching.
VRQA	Means the Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority.
WSA Act	Means Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic), as amended from time to time.
WWCC	Means Working with Children Check.

Overarching Values and Principles

The School's approach to student safety and wellbeing is guided by a number of overarching principles and values (which are set out below) that guide the development and regular review of strategies, practices, policies and procedures to uphold our commitment to protect students from all forms of harm:

- All students at the School have a right to be safe and to feel safe.
- The safety and wellbeing of students is the School's paramount consideration.
- The safety and wellbeing of students is dependent upon the existence of a student safe culture.
- Student safety and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility.

- Student safety and wellbeing awareness is embodied, promoted and openly discussed within our school community.
- Families can participate in decisions affecting their child and they, and the school community, are engaged and informed about the School's approach to student safety and wellbeing.
- Staff have regard to a student's diverse circumstances, needs, and vulnerabilities so that they can provide support and respond to those who are vulnerable and to ensure equity is upheld in policy and practice.
- Students are informed about their rights, supported to participate in decisions that affect them, and taken seriously when they raise concerns.
- Families and the school community are provided with accessible information about the School's child safety and wellbeing practices and are encouraged to contribute to policy review and improvement.

Student Safety and Wellbeing Responsibilities

Society as a whole shares responsibility for promoting the safety and protection of students from child abuse and reportable conduct. In the School context, all members of the school community have a role to play.

	Responsibility
Board	The Board is the governing body for the legal entity which operates the School, and as such is ultimately responsible for ensuring that student safety and wellbeing (and in particular the care, safety and welfare of children and young people) is the School's paramount consideration. Without limiting that responsibility, the Board: • Acquires guidance and information on student safety and wellbeing matters, and keeps up-to-date with its student safety and wellbeing obligations through engaging in professional development. • Satisfies itself that the School has strategies (reflected through policies, procedures, words and actions) to embed a culture of student safety and wellbeing in the governance, operations and culture of the School, which comply with the Board's obligations under Ministerial Order No. 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and Boarding Premises. • Delegates roles and responsibilities to the Principal, for achieving the School's student safety and wellbeing strategies. • Satisfies itself that the Principal has allocated appropriate roles and responsibilities to the School Executive Team, and to staff, for achieving the School's student safety and wellbeing strategies. • Satisfies itself that the school community is engaged and informed about the School's student safety and wellbeing strategies, and allocation of roles and responsibilities. • Ensures that the School, and in particular the Principal, has adequate resources and support to achieve the School's student safety and wellbeing strategies.

	• Keeps the Principal and, via the Principal keeps, all staff accountable for achieving the School's student safety and wellbeing strategies, sharing relevant information and ensuring adequate recordkeeping in accordance with the Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards. • Periodically reviews the effectiveness of the School's student safety and wellbeing strategies in practice (including by, if considered appropriate, revising those strategies). • Ensures that student safety and wellbeing remains a regular Board agenda item for review, reflection and discussion as well as ensuring that the School reports on the outcomes of any relevant review to the school community. • Ensures that privacy and employment law obligations are met when responding to student concerns and complaints.
Principal	In accordance with good governance, the Board delegates responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the School – and in particular the care, safety, wellbeing and welfare of students – to the Principal. The Principal is therefore responsible at a day-to-day level, and accountable to the Board, for taking all practical measures to ensure that: • The School has a student safety and cultural safety culture (including in the online environment), and that this is promoted within the school environment – such as at assemblies and on posters in visible locations. • The School's student safety and wellbeing strategies are achieved, both in policy and in practice. • The School's student safety and wellbeing policies are communicated to parents, students and families, and that input is sought from them regarding policy development and review, and that the processes contained within are understood and culturally safe. • Staff are enabled, prepared and supported when managing student safety and wellbeing complaints, including in their support of the student(s) involved (and, where appropriate, their families). • Staff are educated, and complying with, their professional and statutory responsibilities regarding student safety and wellbeing. • Staff are enabled, prepared and supported in identifying the risks to student safety and wellbeing, noting that indicators of harm may vary depending on the differences and needs of the student. • Staff are enabled, prepared and supported to create, maintain and dispose of records about student safety and wellbeing in line with the Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards. • Staff champion and model compliance with safety and wellbeing policies and procedures. • Concerns about student safety and wellbeing are dealt with seriously, promptly and thoroughly, and in accordance with the School's policies and procedures, and any statutory obligations

	and that the School co-operate with law enforcement agencies and relevant authorities as required. • The Board receives timely reports regarding student safety and wellbeing concerns and risks, or any developments regarding the School's student safety and wellbeing obligations.
School Executive Team	The School Executive Team is committed to 'leading from the front' and engaging in a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to student safety and wellbeing issues. Where appropriate, the School Executive Team will assist the Principal with discharging the student safety and wellbeing responsibilities outlined in this document, and as otherwise required by legislation and good practice.
Child Safety Officers	Key responsibilities for the School's CSOs include: • Having a good working knowledge and appreciation of the School's student safety and wellbeing framework. • Without replacing any legal reporting obligations any person may have, supporting the Principal in promptly managing the School's response to an allegation of actual or suspected child abuse or reportable conduct, and ensuring that the allegation is taken seriously and responded to appropriately and thoroughly. • Ensuring the School's student safety and wellbeing strategies are clearly and regularly communicated to staff, students and other members of the school community. • Ensuring the School's student safety and wellbeing strategies are being implemented effectively and are strengthened where required. • Ensuring a strong and sustainable student safety and wellbeing culture is embedded within the School.
Staff	All staff are required to comply with the School's student safety and wellbeing framework (including in particular this policy, <i>Student Safety and Wellbeing Policy</i>), as well as their legal and professional obligations with respect to the prevention and reporting of actual or suspected child abuse and reportable conduct. It is each such staff member's individual responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse or reportable conduct, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have with one of the Principal, the School Executive Team, the School's CSOs (and/or with external agencies, where required). In this regard, staff are encouraged to voice their concerns, no matter how minor, trivial or insignificant. All contractors, labour hire workers, secondees and volunteers involved in student-connected work are required to adhere to this policy, Student Safety and Wellbeing - Staff Code of Conduct and the Code of Conduct- Teachers, Students and Community and are

	responsible for contributing to the safety and wellbeing of students in the school environment. They too have obligations with respect to the reporting of actual or suspected child abuse or reportable conduct. Again, it is the School's expectation that contractors, labour hire workers, secondees and volunteers are attuned to their individual responsibilities and act in accordance with their internal and external reporting obligations, and the School's policies and procedures.
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Recognising Child Abuse

Types of Child Abuse	Details and examples
Sexual offence, sexual misconduct or grooming	• Harassment. • Encouraging a child to engage in or be involved in sexual activity. • Compelling sexual touching.
Physical Abuse	• Intentionally or recklessly engaging in conduct which causes physical violence or apprehended physical violence which causes or is likely to cause physical harm • Pushing, kicking, pulling, providing illicit substances to a child or student, slapping, hitting
Serious Emotional and Psychological Harm	• When a child has suffered or is likely to suffer emotional or psychological harm that causes the child's emotional or intellectual development is or is likely to be significantly damaged and the child's parents have not protected or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm.
Serious Neglect	• Neglect is an omission. • Serious harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, medical care, or failing to respond to allegations of abuse or risk to child safety

Examples of indicators of harm include but are not limited to:

Physical Violence

- Unexplained bruises, burns, welts, cuts, grazes or scratches (or unlikely explanations)
- Avoidance of physical contact, or disproportionate reactions or limited emotion displayed
- Unexplained absences and decline in academic performance
- Wearing clothing that is unsuitable for the weather conditions (to hide injuries)
- Substance abuse, self-harm or suicide attempts

Sexual Offences

- Signs of pain, itching or discomfort in the genital or rectal area
- Sexualised behaviours
- Withdrawal, low self-esteem, suicidal ideation, self-harm
- Manifestation of psychological diagnoses including anxiety, depression and substance misuse
- Presence of sexually transmitted diseases
- Frequent urinary tract infections
- Self-mutilation
- Displaying age-inappropriate sexual behaviour or knowledge
- Inappropriate expression of affection
- Sudden fears of specific places or particular adults
- Obsessive and compulsive washing
- Complaining of headaches, stomach pains or nausea
- Sleeping difficulties
- Poor self-care or personal hygiene
- Regressive behaviours such as bedwetting and speech loss
- Substance abuse, self harm or suicide attempts.

Emotional or Psychological Harm

- Delays in emotional, mental or physical development
- Speech impairments such as stuttering or being selectively mute
- Rocking, thumb-sucking or other infantile behaviours
- Eating disorders
- Exhibiting high anxiety or symptoms of stress
- Poor self-image or low self-esteem
- Displaying aggressive, demanding or attention-seeking behaviour
- Compulsive lying or stealing
- Unexplained mood swings or depression
- Poor social and interpersonal skills
- Excessive neatness or cleanliness
- Substance abuse, self-harm or suicide attempt.

Neglect

- Frequent hunger or stealing or begging for food
- Poor hygiene
- Lack adequate or suitable clothing
- Refusal or reluctance to go home
- Appearing dirty and unwashed
- Unattended health problems
- Appearing pale and weak
- Inadequate shelter or unsanitary living conditions
- Aggressive or self-destructive behaviour
- Involvement in criminal activity
- Poor, irregular or non-attendance at School
- Limited positive interaction with parents, carers or guardians
- Poor academic performance
- Substance abuse

Statement of Commitment to Student Safety and Wellbeing

Set out below, is the School's publicly available statement of commitment to student safety and wellbeing:

Rossbourne School is committed to creating a Child Safe Organisation through the implementation of the Child Safe Standards as specified in Ministerial Order No 1359 (2022). We will implement strategies, policies, procedures and practices that comply with the prescribed standards, to ensure the on-going safety of students.

A Student Safety and Wellbeing Culture

Creating and maintaining a student safety and wellbeing culture requires input from the entire school community. Our aim is to provide a safe environment that aligns with the School's mission and values of Respect, Honesty, Sharing, Resilience and Inclusion.

To achieve this, we promote a progressive education model that motivates, nurtures and prepares each generation for the demands of its time.

Through our processes and practices, we also ensure that a student safety and wellbeing culture is championed and modelled at all levels of the School, from the top down to the bottom up. Accordingly, student safety and wellbeing are embedded in our school leadership, governance and culture. We do this by setting clear expectations regarding student safety and wellbeing to our school community (including staff and students), and ensuring that at all times, our governance arrangements facilitate the implementation of this policy (including by making student safety and wellbeing a standing agenda item and reviewing the School's student safety and wellbeing processes across all levels).

Support and Engagement of All Students

The School appreciates that a student safety and wellbeing environment looks different for every student, and in delivering this, supports and respects the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as students with a disability or who are otherwise vulnerable (including students who identify as LGBTIQ+ and those with challenging home situations).

The School also appreciates that a student safe environment is contingent on a culturally safe environment, which requires proactive and ongoing efforts to maintain.

Our primary focus in delivering personalised education and through decision-making, is that all students are safe, feel safe, and are able to create and develop a range of strategies and skills, which can be used flexibly to flourish in all aspects of their lives. As such, we support and encourage students to talk openly and share their views, particularly about matters that directly impact them.

Rossbourne School recognises that a child safe culture depends on student participation and empowerment. Students are informed about their rights, supported to express their views, encouraged to identify trusted adults and help-seeking pathways and then taken seriously when they raise concerns. This includes:

- Students regularly informed about their rights to safety, participation and support
- Promotion of respectful relationships and peer connection
- Age-appropriate information provided about recognising unsafe situations, including online

- Support to identify trusted adults and safe reporting pathways
- Staff using child-friendly inclusive ways to invite students voice and participation.

The School will aim to ensure students (and their parents) are provided with the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to support their personal safety, wellbeing and empowerment, including:

- Understanding, identifying, discussing and reporting student safety and wellbeing matters
- Acceptable standards of behaviour for students attending the School
- Healthy and respectful relationships (including those relating to unsafe situations, gender and sexuality)
- Resilience.

The School will aim to ensure that staff are provided with the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain a student and culturally safe environment, including through:

- Actively supporting and encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families to:
 - Express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights
 - Facilitate participation and inclusion in all aspects of school life
- Implementing and embedding strategies within the school community that acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait culture and understand its importance to the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait children and students.
- Cultural training to improve understanding and respect (particularly with regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture), appreciation of culturally sensitive issues, including using appropriate language when referring to individuals or communities, and to equip staff to build culturally safe environments for children and young people.
- Identifying, confronting and addressing incidences of racism seriously (noting it will not be tolerated), with the appropriate consequences and where appropriate with the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and their families.
- Ensuring that the School's strategies, practices, policies and procedures create a culturally safe and inclusive environment which values and respects the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and students, (including their families), as well as others from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

- (f) Providing particular attention to the needs of students with a disability (or otherwise, additional needs), students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students who identify as LGBTIQ+ (or who are otherwise gender diverse) and those students who are unable to live at home.
- (g) Providing particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to promote and provide a culturally safe environment for them.

The School will promote its student safety and wellbeing practices to students in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand and user-friendly, including by:

- (a) The appointment of Child Safety Officers who champion student safety and wellbeing. Refer to document Child Safety Officers.
- (b) Training staff to recognise the indicators of harm to students, including harm caused by not only adults but also other children and young people, and harm in an online environment.
- (c) Collaborating with parents to ensure that they are provided with the information necessary to maintain consistent messaging about child abuse and reportable conduct.
- (d) Encouraging students to identify safe and unsafe environments and situations (including in an online environment).
- (e) Setting clear student safety and wellbeing standards so that staff, students and the school community are aware of the standards that are expected, and those which fall short of the School's expectations.
- (f) Distributing child-friendly publications, including student safety and wellbeing posters (e.g. PROTECT poster).
- (g) Clearly communicating where students can access support, make a report about safety or wellbeing concerns, or otherwise obtain information.
- (h) Ensuring that students have identified safety and wellbeing, and support, networks to overcome any barriers that may prevent disclosure of safety or wellbeing concerns.
- (i) Ensuring staff are trained and supported to effectively implement this policy.

Raising and Responding to Student Safety and Wellbeing Concerns

The School takes all allegations or disclosures of suspected child abuse and reportable conduct seriously, and responds to such allegations and disclosures promptly and thoroughly.

All instances of suspected child abuse or reportable conduct, allegations of child abuse or reportable conduct, or student safety and wellbeing concerns and complaints, must be reported to the Principal, a member of the School Executive Team, a Child Safety Officer, or to the Board where it concerns the Principal) and will be treated very seriously and consistently according to the School's and individual staff member's internal and external reporting procedures and obligations.

The School has a Student Safety and Wellbeing – Raising and Responding to Concerns Policy and Procedures, available on the School's website, which sets out:

- How concerns about actual and suspected child abuse and reportable conduct may be raised with the School.
- Who such concerns can be raised with at first instance (including the Principal, the School Executive Team, the School's Child Safety Officers or the School Board where it concerns the Principal).
- How such concerns will be dealt with by the School (including by complying with any legislative reporting obligations, and the School's expectations of staff regarding information sharing and record keeping).
- How the School will support or assist students (and their families) who disclose such concerns, or who are otherwise linked to such concerns.

The School will ensure that the procedures contained in the Student Safety and Wellbeing – Raising and Responding to Concerns Policy and Procedures are student-focused, and can be easily understood by the school community, in particular students.

If School staff believe a student is at immediate risk of child abuse, they must phone 000.

Rossbourne School has a publicly available, child-focused and culturally safe process for handling complaints and concerns relating to child abuse and student safety and wellbeing. The School's Student Safety and Wellbeing – Raising and Responding to Concerns Policy and Procedures sets out the steps for reporting, responding, recordkeeping, information sharing and support.

Other concerns may be raised by members of the school community in accordance with the Grievance Policy (Community).

Reporting a Sexual Offence: Failure to Protect Offence

Failure by a person in authority to protect a child under the age of 16 from criminal sexual abuse is also an offence under section 49O of the Crimes Act.

This applies where there is substantial risk that a child under the care, supervision or authority of an organisation (including a student of a school) will become a victim of a sexual offence by an adult associated with the School.

The person in a position of authority may be guilty of an offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

The offence requires an associated person to reduce or remove a 'substantial' risk. It is not a criminal offence to fail to address every possible risk that a sexual offence may be committed against a child. However, there are a number of factors to assist associated persons in identifying risks which amount to 'substantial' risks. These include:

- The likelihood or probability that the child will become the victim of a sexual offence
- The nature of the relationships between a child and the adult who may pose a risk to the child

- The background of the adult who may pose a risk to the child, including any past or alleged misconduct
- Any vulnerabilities particular to a child, which may increase the likelihood that they may become the victim of a sexual offence.

Any other relevant fact which may indicate a substantial risk of a sexual offence being committed against a child.

Student Safety and Wellbeing Employment Practices

We believe that the safety and wellbeing of students is dependent on the existence of a student safe culture. Establishing that culture requires effective staff recruitment, supervision and management practices.

All positions at the School that involve student-connected work will have a position description, which clearly sets out:

- The position's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding student safety and wellbeing.
- The applicant's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to education and student safety and wellbeing.
- The School's values and commitment in respect of student safety and wellbeing.
- How the School will support those who make disclosures.

Student safety and wellbeing is a paramount consideration during the recruitment process. All staff working with children and young people must be suitable and reflect the School's values and commitment to student safety and wellbeing in practice.

The School assesses the suitability of staff to undertake student-connected work through screening (including identity checks), qualification verifications, values-based interviews, work history checks and referee checks.

All prospective staff will be informed about the School's student safety and wellbeing practices (including but not limited to this policy, the Student Safety and Wellbeing - Staff Code of Conduct, the School's and individual staff member's record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations), and be subject to student safety and wellbeing screening in accordance with the School's obligations under legislation (including Ministerial Order No. 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises).

A successful applicant cannot commence at the School until written clearance in respect of student safety and wellbeing screening is obtained. A current VIT registration or WWCC (or equivalent) must be sighted and verified by the School and appropriately recorded before staff can engage in student-connected work.

Appropriate and mandatory induction regarding the School's student safety and wellbeing practices (including policies and procedures) will follow any successful appointment or engagement.

The School requires that staff act professionally, and in a way that embodies the School's public commitment to student safety and wellbeing throughout their time at the School. The School has a Student Safety and Wellbeing - Staff Code of Conduct, available on the School's website, which provides guidelines for staff on expected behavioural standards and responsibilities, and sets out examples of appropriate and inappropriate behaviours. The School will take appropriate disciplinary action where a staff member is found to have acted contrary to that Code, or the School's other policies and procedures regarding appropriate standards of behaviour.

At least annually, the School will ensure that appropriate guidance and training is provided to relevant staff (including the Board) engaged in student-connected work about:

- Individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for identifying and managing the risk of child abuse and reportable conduct.
- Child abuse and reportable conduct risks in the school environment (including the online environment).
- The School's current student safety and wellbeing standards and practices.
- The Director of Business Operations is responsible for taking reasonable steps to ensure all staff complete the School's mandatory student safety and wellbeing training modules and briefings.

The School will ensure that privacy and employment law obligations are met when responding to student concerns and complaints.

Staff will otherwise be subject to regular supervision, training and periodic student safety and wellbeing checks, including to ensure their ongoing suitability for student-connected work.

Risk Management

The School identifies, assesses, manages and reviews risks to child safety and wellbeing in physical and online environments, including risks associated with excursions, camps, extra-curricular activities, external providers and digital platforms.

The School will develop and implement risk management strategies regarding student safety and wellbeing, both online and in the physical school environment without compromising a student's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.

These strategies will identify, control, remove and otherwise focus on preventing and reducing, the risk(s) of child abuse, reportable conduct and otherwise, risks to student safety and wellbeing by taking into account the nature of the environment, the activities expected to be conducted in that environment (including the provision of services by contractors or outside organisations), and the characteristics and needs of all students expected to be present in that environment.

In addition, these strategies will place a positive responsibility on ensuring that student safety and wellbeing is actively promoted at school.

Where the School identifies risks of actual or suspected child abuse or reportable conduct occurring in the online or physical school environment, it will make a written record of those risks in the Child Safety Risk Register and determine the action(s) it will take to remove or otherwise reduce the risks (risk controls and risk treatments).

The School will monitor, review and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls and risk treatments annually, and update these where required. The Child Safety Risk Register forms part of the School's broader Risk Management Framework and supports a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring that child safety risk management is proactive, transparent and embedded in all School operations.

The School will ensure it creates, maintains and disposes of any records about student safety and wellbeing in line with the Public Record Office Victoria Record keeping Standards, including minimum retention periods regarding these obligations. In addition, the School will detail its information sharing and record-keeping processes and ensure all staff (including volunteers) understand their relevant obligations.

Risk Assessments for Specific School Contexts and Activities

The following school contexts and activities require as part of their approvals and ongoing child safety risk management processes that specific risk assessments be undertaken and provided either to Principal (no nominee or relevant committee):

Physical Environment

Ongoing, periodic reviews must be undertaken of all physical School facilities to:

- Eliminate child safety physical isolation risks such as solid classroom doors and rooms with no windows.
- Identify and address potential concealment or supervision issues in playgrounds, change rooms, and storage areas.,
- Apply procedural controls where elimination is not possible, including random checks of obstructed or out of the way locations.
- Ensure compliance with the School Occupational Health and Safety policies and procedures

Online Environment

Regular monitoring and periodic reviews must be undertaken of the School's online environment and electronic communications to:

- Identify and eliminate risks such as inadequate access controls, inappropriate sharing of information, data security vulnerabilities and online grooming.
- Ensure compliance with the Student Safety and Wellbeing - Staff Code of Conduct, and acceptable use of digital technologies.
- Implement cyber-safety education for students and staff to strengthen protective behaviours and resilience.
- Ensure appropriate monitoring systems, filtering and reporting mechanisms are in place to detect breaches or risks.

Trips, Excursions and Camps

The School has developed and implements specific policies and procedures relating to trips, excursions and camps to ensure Child Safety risks specific to excursions and overnight stays are identified and controls are put in place.

- The School uses the Consent2Go online excursion management system to record, review and approve risks.
- For any new, changed or high risk activity, additional consultation and risk review with the Principal (or nominee) is required.
- Risk assessments include staffing ratios, staff gender mix, sleeping arrangements, emergency procedures and adherence to the Student Safety and Wellbeing - Staff Code of Conduct.

Sport and Extra-Curricular Activities

The School has developed and implements policies and procedures to manage Child Safety risks specific to sporting and other extra-curricular activities. This includes:

- Maintaining professional boundaries and modelling appropriate behaviour.
- Ensuring all staff including volunteers and contractors are aware of these obligations
- Training on appropriate demonstration techniques use of change rooms and supervision of activities.
- Applying active supervision both on School grounds and in off-site or partner facilities.
- Ensuring risk assessments are reviewed for regular and seasonal activities, particularly when conducted with external providers.

Student Participation and Empowerment

The School recognises that a student safe culture is also contingent upon the participation and empowerment of students themselves.

Consistent with this understanding, the School will ensure:

- That students are informed about all their rights, including to safety, information and participation (for example, those in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child).
- That the importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged to help students feel safe and be less isolated.
- That all students are provided with access to age-appropriate child abuse prevention education, including sexual abuse prevention education and information. Programs are designed to meet students' developmental, wellbeing and learning needs and are delivered at various stages of a student's enrolment.
- Staff are attuned to the signs of harm (including that caused by child abuse and reportable conduct) and facilitate child-friendly ways for students to express their views, participate in decision making and raise their concerns.
- The School has strategies and curriculum planning documents in place to develop a culture that facilitates participation and is responsive to the input of students.

- The School provides opportunities for students to participate and are responsive to their contributions, thereby strengthening confidence and engagement.

Sexual Abuse Prevention Education

Rossbourne School is committed to empowering students with the knowledge, skills and confidence to recognise, respond to and report inappropriate, unsafe or abusive behaviour.

The School provides all students with access to age-appropriate sexual abuse prevention education and information through a planned whole-school approach. Topics may include:

- Personal safety and protective behaviours
- Bodily autonomy and personal boundaries
- Consent and respectful relationships
- Recognising grooming and unsafe behaviours
- Safe vs unsafe places and situations
- Saying No: Standing up for yourself
- Online safety and digital citizenship
- Student rights, support and complaint processes
- Knowing who to trust and tell
- Support networks and helpful resources

Age-appropriate sexual abuse prevention education is delivered through the School's assembly program and broader wellbeing initiatives to support student safety, wellbeing and protective behaviours.

Records of program delivery will be maintained to demonstrate that all students are offered access to sexual abuse prevention education in age-appropriate ways.

Reflection and Continuous Improvement

The School is committed to continual improvement that is responsive to emerging thinking, evidence and practice, so as to eliminate (where practicable) the possibility of student safety risks occurring in the first place. Where the School can improve, it will strive to do so. The School will report on the outcomes of any relevant review to the school community.

Breach of this Policy

The School emphasises the need for staff to fully comply with the requirements of this policy.

Staff found to be in breach of the requirements of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or engagement. Breaches may also result in notifications to appropriate authorities and/or the Police.

Communication and Implementation

This policy is made publicly available on the School's website.

This policy is available to staff as part of the School's and the Board's internal policies and procedures. Aspects of (and updates to) the School's student safety and wellbeing framework, including this policy, are addressed in the School's professional development updates, training programs, bulletins and newsletters.

The Board and Principal will review this policy and School's student safety and wellbeing practices at least every two years (or more frequently, including in response to legislative amendments, an incident, changes to the School's internal procedures or practices, or otherwise as requested by the Principal) and implement improvements where applicable.

Families and the school community will be afforded the opportunity to contribute to the review and development of the School's student safety and wellbeing policies and practices (including this policy).

Annual training and refresher sessions on this policy are provided to all staff.

The Principal is responsible for monitoring staff compliance with this policy. All staff must ensure that they abide by this policy and assist the School in implementing this policy.

Related Documents

- Student Safety and Wellbeing – Raising and Responding to Concerns Policy and Procedures
- Student Safety and Wellbeing - Staff Code of Conduct
- Grievance Policy and Procedure (Staff)
- Grievance Policy and Procedure (Students)
- Grievance Policy and Procedure (Community)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Ministerial Order 1359

Fact sheets

- [Grooming offence | Department of Justice and Community Safety Victoria](#)
- [Failure to disclose offence | Department of Justice and Community Safety Victoria](#)
- [Failure to protect: a new criminal offence to protect children from sexual abuse | Department of Justice and Community Safety Victoria](#)

POLICY OWNER	APPROVED BY SCHOOL BOARD/PRINCIPAL	DATE APPROVED	VERSION	REVIEW DATE
Principal	School Board	9 Sep 2026	7	9 Sep 2028