UPPER YARRA
SECONDARY COLLEGE
www.uysc.vic.edu.au

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Promoting healthy, safe, and respectful school communities.

Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact an Assistant Principal at the College on 5967 1 877.

Purpose

The Upper Yarra Secondary College Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our school's commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of our school's approach to implementing Ministerial Order 1359 (PDF, 363KB) 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 guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

Scope

This policy:

- applies to all Upper Yarra Secondary College staff, volunteers, and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to school council 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 UYSC's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the *related school policies* section below.

Definitions

The following terms in this policy have specific definitions:

- ***Child:*** means a child or young person who is under the age of 18 years.
- ***Child safety****:* includes 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 suspicions, incidents, disclosures, or allegations of child abuse.
- ***Child abuse:***
  a) any act committed against a child involving:
    1. a sexual offence
    2. grooming offences under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958

  b) the infliction, on a child, of:

1. physical violence
2. serious emotional or psychological harm

c) the serious neglect of a child.

- ***Child-connected work:*** 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-related work:*** usually involves (or is likely to involve) direct contact with a child, irrespective of whether that contact is supervised or not, and in any of the child-related occupational fields listed in the Act.
- ***School environment:*** means any of the following physical, online, or virtual places, used during or outside school hours:

  a) A campus of the school

  b) Online or virtual school environments made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child or student (including email, intranet systems, software applications, collaboration tools, and online services)

  c) Other locations provided by the school or through a third-party provider for a child or student to use including, but not limited to, locations used for:

  1. camps
  2. approved homestay accommodation.
  3. delivery of education and training such as registered training organisations, TAFEs, non-school senior secondary providers, or another school; or (iv) sporting events, excursions, competitions or other events.

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

  1. employed under Part 2.4 of the ETR Act in the Government teaching service
  2. employed under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act
  3. a contracted service provider (whether a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary) engaged by the school governing authority to perform child-related work

- ***School governing authority:***

  1. the proprietor of a school, including a person authorised to act for or on behalf of the proprietor
  2. the governing body for a school (however described), as authorised by the proprietor of a school or the ETR Act
  3. the principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school, the school governing body, or the ETR Act.

- ***Student:*** a person who is enrolled at or attends the school.
- ***Volunteer:*** a person who performs work without remuneration or reward for the school premises in the school environment.

Statement of commitment to child safety

Upper Yarra Secondary College is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families.

We are committed to providing environments 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 children and 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.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and home, children and young people 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.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our school has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

Roles and responsibilities

School leadership team

Our school leadership team, comprising the Principal, two Assistant Principals and five Leading Teachers is 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 1359.

Principals and Assistant Principals will:

- ensure 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 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 leadership team meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of 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 and volunteers

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school or the Department of Education and Training, and always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- act in accordance with UYSC's *Child Safety Code of Conduct*.
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, including following the Four Critical Actions for Schools
- 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 council

In performing the functions and powers given to them under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, school council members will:

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings
- undertake annual training on child safety: PROTECT.
- approve updates to, and act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members
- when hiring school council employees, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe. At Upper Yarra Secondary College, council employment duties are delegated to the principal who is bound by this policy.

Specific staff child safety responsibilities

Upper Yarra Secondary College has nominated a child safety champion to support the principal to implement our child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training.

The responsibilities of the child safety champion are outlined at Guidance for child safety champions.

The principal and child safety champion are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

- The Assistant Principal is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.* Anyone in our school community should approach an Assistant Principal if they have any concerns about the College's compliance with the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*.
- The Assistant 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 (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and Child Safety Risk Register.

Our school has also established a Child Safety and Wellbeing Team and meet regularly with the Student Reference Group on child safety. The Child Safety and Wellbeing Team meet regularly to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing. The Student Reference Group provides an opportunity for students to provide input into school strategies.

Our Risk Management Committee monitors the Child Safety Risk Register.

Child Safety Code of Conduct

Upper Yarra Secondary College's *Child Safety Code of Conduct* sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing

At UYSC we identify, assess, and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments.

These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and with our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site overnight camps, adventure 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 manage those risks. Our school leadership team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

Establishing a culturally safe environment

At Upper Yarra Secondary College, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

We have developed the following strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community:

- Appointment of a First Nations Advocate who collaborates with staff and students to build schoolwide knowledge of Aboriginal histories, cultures, perspectives, values, skills and attitudes.
- Lead school in the implementation and delivery of Respectful Relationships
- Begin events and meetings with a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country as a standing agenda item. Use this as an opportunity to pause and reflect or open a discussion.
- Fly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags on school ground.
- Share information through school newsletters, school assemblies, parent information nights
- Make Aboriginal voice part of decision making in matters that affect Aboriginal students
- Implement the Koorie Education Policy
- Actively engage with Koorie Engagement Support Officers (KESOs) to provide advice and assist in creating culturally inclusive learning environments
- Utilise and consistently reference the Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026.
- Train mentors through the LOOKOUT school
- Express zero tolerance of racism in your statement of commitment to child safety included in your Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and other documents
- Staff CUST training
- Yarning Circles once a term
- Participation in the Yara Ranges Tech School Koori Student Program.
- Implement the Collaborative Indigenous Strategy as part of the Lilydale and Yara Valley Education Plan.

Student empowerment

To support child safety and wellbeing at Upper Yarra Secondary College, we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to the College's 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, the UYSC student Code of Conduct, referencing and modelling College values and support group contacts.

- We inform students of their rights through the whole school approach to Respectful Relationships and Student Code of Conduct and give them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers.
- We ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time.
- Students and families can also access information on how to report concerns through the Principal, Assistant Principal, Wellbeing Team member or trusted person at the school and at the school reception.

When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct or abuse of a child, we will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously, check our understanding of the complaint, support the student, and keep them (and their parents and carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

- Provide a variety of ways to raise concerns by providing an anonymous year-level student suggestion box, distribute regular online surveys through PIVOT and Google Docs.
- Display posters acknowledging sexuality and gender diversity and identify safe spaces where students can go if they need support.
- Carry out regular whole school wellbeing assessment surveys through PIVOT.
- Deliver age-appropriate curriculum content about Respectful Relationships, sexuality, consent and sexual abuse prevention through being a lead school for Respectful Relationships and The Resilience Project.
- Follow through on your commitments – show students that the leadership team and staff are trustworthy and take their worries or concerns seriously.
- Teach students practical protective strategies, including:
    - what to do when they feel unsafe
    - phrases they can use to raise an objection
    - pathways for raising safety concerns, and
    - online safety behaviours.
- Provide contact information for independent child and youth advocacy services or helplines.

Family engagement

Upper Yarra Secondary College families and the College 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, at Upper Yarra Secondary College we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.
We do this by:

- communication through the Compass parent portal, College website, newsletters, school council, subcommittees of school council, student, staff, and parent meetings.
- all our child safety policies and procedures are available for students and parents at http://www.uysc.vic.edu.au/ and at UYSC reception.

- significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the College, the wellbeing hub, library, and team spaces.

Diversity and equity

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate 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 child has unique skills, strengths, and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal children and young people
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and young people with disabilities
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- international students
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Our Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

- Communicate that discrimination and bullying are not tolerated – if incidents of bullying or discrimination occur, address the incident in line with school policy. Bullying Prevention Policy
- Let students know they can raise concerns or report incidents that occurred at school and outside the school.
- Check in with vulnerable students and their families to confirm their needs are being met.
- Engage genuinely with students through Support Groups. Find out what matters to them, what they know and don't know about safety, and what they need to be safe and feel safe.
- Display flags representing different cultures within the school community.

Celebrate:

- IDAHOBIT (International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism and Transphobia, 17 May)
- National Reconciliation Week (27 May–3 June)
- World Mental Health Day (10 October)
- International Day of Persons with Disability (3 December)
- Cultural Diversity Week (March)

Suitable staff and volunteers

At Upper Yarra Secondary College, we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

Staff recruitment

When recruiting staff, we follow the Department of Education and Training's recruitment policies and guidelines, available on the Policy and Advisory Library (PAL) at:

- Recruitment in Schools
- Suitability for Employment Checks
- School Council Employment
- Contractor OHS Management.

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, Upper Yarra Secondary College will:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching 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 job and working with children.
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Staff induction

All newly appointed staff will be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program will include a focus on:

- the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document)
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

Ongoing supervision and management of staff

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

Staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. This will be done through annual performance reviews and observations and regular staff presentations on Child Safety Standards.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our school and department policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

- Ensure recruitment advertisements for staff in child connected work contain:
    - the job's requirements, including expected knowledge of child development appropriate to the role
    - an outline of duties and responsibilities regarding child safety and wellbeing
    - essential or relevant qualifications, experience, and attributes in relation to child safety and wellbeing.
- Provide all job applicants with the College's *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy* and *Child Safety Code of Conduct* and links to child safety resources.

- Develop questions about child safety in job interviews.
- Seek referees for both staff and volunteers as appropriate, including their last employer, and overseas referees if they've worked overseas.
- Ask referees about the person's character and experience in working directly with children and young people.
- Communicate regularly with staff and volunteers about the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy* and *Code of Conduct* in supervision meetings, at staff meetings, in newsletters and staff updates.
- Include child safety and wellbeing as a regular agenda item for staff meetings at all levels of the organisation.
- Undertake a risk assessment

Suitability of volunteers

All volunteers are required to comply with UYSC Volunteers Policy, which describes how we 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 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 staff will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

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

- Upper Yarra Secondary College'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 children and students
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and 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 our volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

- Nominate a child safety champion and support them to facilitate the induction and training programs for staff and volunteers.
- Staff participation in CUST.
- Remind staff regularly that they need to be alert for signs of harm and risk factors and aware of physical and online risks to child safety.
- Provide staff and relevant volunteers with up-to-date contact details for local support services for students and families.

Consider staff needs when designing training, such as:

- Cultural safety for the needs of staff and volunteers who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- Cultural sensitivity for staff and volunteers who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Inclusivity of gender diversity and sexuality
- Accessibility for those with a disability, including individuals' mobility, visual or hearing impaired
- Provide an induction for new staff, volunteers and new school council members on child safety, appropriate to the person's role that covers:
    - the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
    - the Child Safety Code of Conduct
    - the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (incl. mandatory Reporting) policy and procedures
- Direct staff to PROTECT for guidance on:
    - information to assist them to recognise indicators and risk factor of child harm, including harm caused by other children and young people
    - the processes to follow if a concern is raised.
- Keep a record of all staff and volunteers who complete child safety training to ensure all are appropriately trained and training is refreshed as required.

School council training and education

To ensure UYSC School Council is equipped with the knowledge required to make 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 council 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
- Upper Yarra Secondary College child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices

Complaints and reporting processes

Upper Yarra Secondary College fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in the College's Complaint Policy.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers, including school council employees, must follow our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures. Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school.
As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, we will ensure our school follows:

- the Four Critical Actions for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child
- the Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending

Our Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy and Bullying Prevention Policy cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

Communications

Upper Yarra Secondary College 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 including the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy* (this document), Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations* (including Mandatory Reporting) *Policy and Procedure*
- displaying PROTECT posters around the school
- updates in our College newsletter and Compass newsfeed.
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings.

Privacy and information sharing

Upper Yarra Secondary College collects, uses, and discloses information about children 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: Schools' Privacy Policy.

Records management

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the Department of Education and Training's policy: Records Management – School Records

Review of child safety practices

At Upper Yarra Secondary College, we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

- Review and improve our policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident
- 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.
- Monitor and manage child safety risks using a risk register.
- Identify ways to involve staff, volunteers, students, families and community members in review processes.

Related policies and procedures

This *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy* is to be read in conjunction with other related College policies, procedures, and codes. These include:

- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Digital Technologies Policy

- Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy
- Visitors Policy
- Volunteers Policy

Department of Education and Training policies

- Bullying Prevention and Response Policy
- Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes
- Complaints Policy
- Contractor OHS Management Policy
- Digital Learning in Schools Policy
- Family Violence Support
- Protecting Children: Reporting Obligations Policy
- Policy and Guidelines for Recruitment in Schools
- Reportable Conduct Policy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Supervision of Students Policy
- Visitors in Schools Policy
- Volunteers in Schools Policy
- Working with Children and other Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors

Other related documents

- Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools
- Four Critical Actions for Schools
- Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending
- Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending
- Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools

Policy status and review

The Assistant Principal is responsible for reviewing and updating the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy* at least every two years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers, and the College community.

Created date	**22nd November , 2024**
Consultation All consultation took place in November 2024 and was endorsed by School Council on 28th November 2024	School council, Wellbeing Team, Year Level Leaders, Principal and Assistant Principals
Endorsed by	Scott Tully Principal

	Lincoln Wilson School Council President
Endorsed on	28th November 2024
Next review date	November 2026