

CHILD SAFE STANDARD 3: CHILD SAFETY POLICY



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact our office administrative team, on (03) 5248-1400.

Contents:

- 1 Purpose**
- 2 Scope**
- 3 Statement of Commitment and Principles**
 - 3.1 Statement of Principles**
 - 3.2 Statement of Commitment**
 - 3.21 Our Commitment to our Students**
 - 3.22 Our Commitment to Parents and Guardians**
 - 3.23 Our Commitment to our Staff (Employees, Volunteers and Contractors)**
- 4. A Child Safe Culture**
- 5 Personnel Understand their Roles and Responsibilities**
- 6 Code of Conduct**
- 7 Human Resources Practices and Training**
- 8 Reporting a Child Safety Concern or Complaint**
- 9 Risk and Reduction Management**
- 10 Listening to Children**
- 11 Confidentiality and Privacy**
- 12 Policy Evaluation and Review**
- 13 Definitions**

1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the strong commitment of Newcomb Secondary College to the care, safety and wellbeing of all students at our school. It provides an outline of the policies, procedures and strategies developed to keep students safe from harm, including all forms of abuse in our school environment, on campus, online and in other locations provided by the school. This policy takes into account relevant legislative requirements within the state of Victoria, including the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in Ministerial Order No. 870.

2 Scope

This policy applies to school staff, including school employees, contractors and school community members. It also applies to all staff and students engaged in any school and school council-run events, activities and services.

3 Statement of Commitment and Principles

At Newcomb Secondary College we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of our school. Newcomb Secondary College has zero tolerance for child abuse and 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. Newcomb Secondary College will 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. 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 in Newcomb Secondary College 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. Newcomb Secondary College will take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety in its planning, decision-making and operations.

3.1 Statement of Principles

The following principles underpin our commitment to child safety at Newcomb Secondary College:

- All students deserve, as a fundamental right, safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect.
- Our school works in partnership with families and the community to ensure that they are engaged in decision-making processes, particularly those that have an impact on child safety and protection.
- All students have the right to a thorough and systematic education in all aspects of personal safety, in partnership with their parents/guardians/caregivers.
- All adults in our school, including teaching and non-teaching staff, volunteers and contractors as well as the broader school community have a responsibility to care for children and young people, to positively promote their wellbeing and to protect them from any kind of harm or abuse.
- The policies, guidelines and codes of conduct for the care, wellbeing and protection of students are based on honest, respectful and trusting relationships between adults and children and young people.
- Policies and practices demonstrate compliance with legislative requirements and cooperation with governments, the police and human services agencies.
- All persons involved in situations where harm is suspected or disclosed must be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect.
- Staff, volunteers, contractors, parents/guardians and students should feel free to raise concerns about child safety, knowing these will be taken seriously by school leadership.
- Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained, with information being provided to those who have a right or a need to be informed, either legally or pastorally

3.2 Statement of Commitment

All students enrolled at Newcomb Secondary College have the right to feel safe and be safe. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we do not and will not tolerate child abuse.

3.21 Our commitment to our students

(a) We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people enrolled in our school. (b) We commit to providing children and young people with positive and nurturing experiences.

(c) We commit to listening to children and young people and empowering them by taking their views seriously, and addressing any concerns that they raise with us.

(d) We commit to taking action to ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse or harm.

(e) We commit to teaching children and young people the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing.

(f) We commit to seeking input and feedback from students regarding the creation of a safe school environment.

3.22 Our commitment to parents and guardians

(a) We commit to communicating honestly and openly with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children.

(b) We commit to engaging with, and listening to, the views of parents and carers about our child-safety practice, policies and procedures.

(c) We commit to transparency in our decision-making with parents and carers where it will not compromise the safety of children or young people.

(d) We commit to acknowledging the cultural diversity of students and families, and being sensitive to how this may impact on student safety issues.

(e) We commit to continuously reviewing and improving our systems to protect children from abuse.

3.33 Our commitment to our school staff (school employees, volunteers and contractors).

(a) We commit to providing all Newcomb Secondary College staff with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles. This will include regular and appropriate learning opportunities.

(b) We commit to providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm policy and procedures in relation to child safety and young people's protection and wellbeing. This will include annual training in the principles and intent of the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct, and staff responsibilities to report concerns.

(c) We commit to listening to all concerns voiced by Newcomb Secondary College staff, volunteers, and contractors about keeping children and young people safe from harm.

(d) We commit to providing opportunities for Newcomb Secondary College school employees, volunteers and contractors to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.

4 A Child Safe Culture

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

5 Personnel Understand their Roles and Responsibilities

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

6 Code of Conduct

CHILD SAFE STANDARD 3: CODE OF CONDUCT

Child Safety Code of Conduct

August 2023

Newcomb Secondary College is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development.

This Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, Department policy, school policies and procedures and professional standards, codes or ethics as these apply to staff and other personnel.

The Principal and school leaders of Newcomb Secondary College will support implementation and monitoring of the Code of Conduct, and will plan, implement and monitor arrangements to provide inclusive, safe and orderly schools and other learning environments. The Principal and school leaders of Newcomb Secondary College will also provide information and support to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively.

All staff, contractors, volunteers and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work are required to comply with the Code of Conduct by observing expectations for appropriate behaviour below. The Code of Conduct applies in all school situations, including school camps and in the use of digital technology and social media.

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work individually, we are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- upholding the school's statement of commitment to child safety at all times
- treating students and families in the school community with respect both within the school environment and outside the school environment as part of normal social and community activities.
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability
- reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the school's leadership and Student Wellbeing Leader
- understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse.
- if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.

Unacceptable behaviours

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work we must not:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse
- develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to ‘grooming’ behaviour (for example, offering gifts)
- exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as abusive and not justified by the educational, therapeutic, or service delivery context
- ignore behaviours by other adults towards students when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate
- discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental guidance, delivering the education curriculum or a therapeutic setting
- treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity.
- communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to school work or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter
- photograph or video a child in a school environment except in accordance with school policy or where required for duty of care purposes
- in the school environment or at other school events where students are present, consume alcohol contrary to school policy 2 or take illicit drugs under any circumstances.

Further to the above expectations, all teaching staff must also abide by the Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct including Principle 1.5: Teachers are always on a professional relationship with student in their school, whether at school or not.

Teachers hold a unique position of influence and trust that should not be violated or compromised. They exercise their responsibilities in ways that recognise that there are limits or boundaries to their relationships with students.

Examples of a professional relationship being violated would include a teacher:

- Having a sexual relationship with a student
- Using sexual innuendo or inappropriate language and/or material with students
- Touches a student without a valid reason
- Holds conversations of a personal nature or has contact with a student via written or electronic means including email, letters, telephone, text message or chat lines, without valid context
- Accepts gifts, which could be reasonably perceived as being used to influence them, from students or their parents

A professional relationship may be compromised if a teacher:

- Attends parties or socialises with students
- Invites a student or students back to their home, particularly if no-one else is present

This Code of Conduct was endorsed/approved by the Principal, in August, 2023, and will be up for review again in 2024.

7 Human Resources Practices and Training

Newcomb Secondary College 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.

When recruiting and selecting employees, contractors and volunteers involved in child-connected work, we make all reasonable efforts to:

- confirm the applicant's Working with Children Check and National Police Check status and/or professional registration (as relevant)
- obtain proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications
- verify the applicant's history of work involving children
- obtain references that address the applicant's suitability for the job and working with children.

Our commitment to child safety and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements for such employee, contractor and volunteer positions, and all applicants are provided with copies of the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct and the Child Safety Policy.

We have processes for monitoring and assessing the continuing suitability of school staff to work with children, including regular reviews of the status of Working with Children Checks and staff professional registration requirements such as Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration.

Training

- Newcomb Secondary College provides annual appropriate guidance and training about child safety. Training includes:
- Staff complete the online module [Protecting Children: Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations \(government schools\)](#)
- Staff watch the Commission for Children and Young People's video on [Creating a Child Safe Organisation](#)
- Staff review of [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools \(pdf - 2.86mb\)](#)

8 Reporting a Child Safety Concern or Complaint

Newcomb Secondary College has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. If the child is at immediate risk:

- Call '000' immediately
- Reassure the child and ensure they are safe
- Be aware of important considerations including cultural, linguistic, physical or intellectual impairments
- Let the child use their own words to describe what has or is occurring
- Anytime there is information to be reported (including after the above actions):
- Contact Jane Osborne, Student Wellbeing Team Leader, Joshua Grabowski or Kelly Montano, Assistant Principal. Document a description of what happened. Our school records any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and stores the records in accordance with security and privacy requirements.

The school's Child Safety Reporting and Responding Obligations including Mandatory Reporting can be found on the Newcomb Secondary College website: <https://www.newcombsc.vic.edu.au/>

9 Risk Reduction and Management

At Newcomb Secondary College, we are committed to proactively and systematically identifying and assessing risks to student safety across our whole school environment and reducing or eliminating (where possible) all potential sources of harm. We document, implement, monitor, and periodically review our risk management strategies for child safety and ensure that the strategies change as needed and as new risks arise. This includes risks posed by the physical environment of the college as well as online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child on social media unless the administrative responsibilities are governed by the college and is integral to the student accessing the curriculum).

Further information about risk management can be provided at the point of need by the College Leadership Team and OHSW Committee.

10 Listening to Children

The school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/carers. Students have access to Social Workers, Youth Workers, a School Nurse, a School Doctor, Lawyer in School and Chaplain as well as a dedicated team of leaders for each year level. The College also provides a core subject around personal and social development for students in Years 7-10 titled, 'Getting Ready for the Outside World' (GROW). The College encourages child and parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/carers 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 parents/carers) informed about progress.

11 Confidentiality and Privacy

This school collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law and other relevant laws. The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the DET Privacy Policy framework, and be accessed via the DET website:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/schoolsprivacypolicy.aspx>

12 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/carers and the school community.

13 Definitions

Ministerial Order 870 provides definitions, including:

Child abuse

Child abuse includes:

- any act committed against a child involving:
- a sexual offence, or
- an offence under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
- the infliction, on a child, of:
- physical violence
- serious emotional or psychological harm, and
- serious neglect of a child.

Child-connected work

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

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

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

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)
- a minister of religion

Policy last reviewed	2024
Consultation	Discussed by members of the Newcomb Secondary College Leadership Team, as part of our Term 4, 2021 School Review.
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	2025