

Purpose

The child safe environments policy sets out Bannockburn College's approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe; and provides the policy framework for school's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

Scope

This policy covers all staff, volunteers, contractors and whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people.

The policy applies across a range of College forums (e.g. camps, online) and outside of College hours. Anywhere that our children require a child safe environment.

Statement of Commitment & Principles

Bannockburn College is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

Bannockburn College has zero tolerance for child abuse.

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

Every person involved in Bannockburn 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.

In its planning, decision-making and operations Bannockburn College will:

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
7. Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues;
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

A child-safe culture

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

The school's plan for creating a child safe culture can be found on the website at www.bannockburnp12.vic.edu.au

Personnel understand their roles and responsibilities/ Code of conduct

College leaders 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.

The 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.

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

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Risk reduction and management

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

Listening to children and reporting a child safety concern or complaint

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

When the College is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct with, or abuse of, a child the College will listen to the complainant's account of things and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (or their parent/carer) informed about progress.

(See Steps Below to follow. Full details of the process are available in the Bannockburn College Keeping Children Safe kit)

Confidentiality and Privacy

Bannockburn College collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law. The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the College Privacy Policy.

Policy evaluation and review

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed in the context of College self-evaluation undertaken as part of the College accountability framework. The review will include input from students, parents and the College community.

Definitions

Ministerial Order 870 provides definitions, including:

Child abuse includes—

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

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

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

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

- a campus of the school
- online College environments (including email and intranet systems)
- other locations provided by the College for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for College camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

College staff being: an individual working in a College environment who is:

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

Related policies and documents

School Policy & Advisory Guide – Duty of Care

School Policy & Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations

DET Child Wellbeing and Safety Framework

College Privacy Policy

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

All staff members of Bannockburn College will implement the four critical actions set out below.

However, all staff members are advised to notify the Principal if they have formed a belief about child abuse and therefore are obligated to make a report. All staff members will be supported through this process by the Principal.

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

As a College staff member, you play a critical role in protecting children in your care.

- You **must** act, by following the 4 critical actions, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.
- You **must** act if you form a suspicion/reasonable belief, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).
- You **must** use the Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template to keep clear and comprehensive notes.

* A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action

ACTION 1: RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to ACTION 2.

If a child is at immediate risk of harm you must ensure their safety by:

- separating alleged victims and others involved
- administering first aid
- **calling 000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance** to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
- identifying a contact person at the College for future liaison with Police.

Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

ACTION 2: REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you must report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

IF THE SOURCE OF SUSPECTED ABUSE IS FROM WITHIN THE SCHOOL:

VICTORIA POLICE

You must report all instances of suspected child abuse involving a College staff member, contractor or volunteer to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report **internally** to:

- College Principal
- Employee Conduct Branch
- DET Security Services Unit

IF THE SOURCE OF SUSPECTED ABUSE IS FROM WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

You **must** report to DHHS Child Protection if a child is considered to be:

- in need of protection from child abuse
- at risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.

VICTORIA POLICE

You **must also** report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report **internally** to:

- College Principal
- DET Security Services Unit

ACTION 3: CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

Your Principal **must** consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:

- **not to contact** the parents/carers (e.g. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parents/carers to be contacted)
- **to contact** the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion).

ACTION 4: PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Your College **must** provide support for children impacted by abuse. This should include the development of a Student Support Plan in consultation with wellbeing professionals. This is an essential part of your duty of care requirements.

Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals etc.

You **must** follow the Four Critical Actions every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.

If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold **significant concerns** for their wellbeing you must still act. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from **Child FIRST** (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support), or to **DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police**.