

## CHILD SAFETY AND EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

**The child safe standards require schools to have strategies to embed a school culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements. Protecting children from abuse is everybody's business, and a school's leadership is essential to instilling a child safety culture.**

### **Leadership in a child safe environment**

Working with children can be very rewarding, and it brings additional responsibilities.

We must act to protect children from abuse and build an environment where children feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. This requires a culture of child safety to be embedded throughout Westall Secondary College so that child safety is part of everyone's everyday thinking and practice. Such a culture is achieved through proactive leadership in demonstrating the appropriate values, attitudes and behaviours of an organisation.

A child safe environment is the product of a range of strategies and initiatives. Westall Secondary College fosters a culture of openness, inclusiveness and awareness. Children and adults know what to do if they observe or are subject to abuse or inappropriate behaviour.

All staff and volunteers consider the safety of all children, and recognise the importance of cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.<sup>1</sup>

### **Governance in a child safe environment**

Leadership takes preventative, proactive and participatory approaches to child safety issues. The safety and wellbeing of children at Westall Secondary College is paramount and given consideration when developing activities, policies and management practices.

### **Leadership responsibilities**

Leadership is responsible for embedding a culture of child safety at Westall Secondary College. Leadership takes the lead in protecting children from abuse and is made aware of child abuse allegations and risks and takes responsibility for ensuring an appropriate response.

**Westall Secondary College** ensures that all allegations of child abuse and child safety concerns are treated very seriously. This includes complying with all legal requirements, including reporting suspicions of child abuse to police and/or child protection.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

### **Identify and analyse risk of abuse**

Westall Secondary College adopts an approach to prevent, detect and respond to child abuse risks. This includes a risk management strategy and policy that sets out how we identify, assess and the steps taken to reduce or remove child abuse risks.

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<sup>1</sup> For definitions of key terms, please see [An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards:](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc)  
<www.dhs.vic.gov.au/\_\_data/assets/word\_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards\_overview.doc>.

### **Develop a child safe policy**

Westall Secondary College has developed a child safe policy which outlines our commitment to promoting children's wellbeing and protecting children from abuse.

### **Develop codes of conduct**

Westall Secondary College has a code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct and care required when working and interacting with children.

We also refer to professional codes of conduct where appropriate i.e. DET and VIT documents.

### **Choose suitable employees and volunteers**

Westall Secondary College takes all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. This includes police record and identity checks, Working with Children Checks where required, face-to-face interviews and detailed reference checks from previous employers.

### **Support, train, supervise and enhance performance**

Westall Secondary College ensures that volunteers and employees who work with children have ongoing supervision, support and training so that their performance is developed and enhanced to help protect children from abuse. The Principal, Assistant Principal and School Wellness co-ordinator are persons in our school who have knowledge of child safety issues and are a point of contact for others who have questions or concerns or want to report an allegation of abuse.

### **Promote inclusion**

Westall Secondary College is inclusive to all children and families. We have a culture that supports:

- cultural safety for Aboriginal children, for example by working in partnership with Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal community controlled organisations.
- cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, for example through the use of community engagement representatives and translators
- cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, for example by using inclusive language and images in policy documents and communications such as the website (inc Google Translate) and newsletters.
- the safety of children with a disability, for example by ensuring our organisation is accessible to everyone and ensuring appropriate training and supervision of staff and volunteers working with children with a disability.

### **Empower and promote the participation of children in decision-making**

Westall Secondary College promotes the involvement and participation of children in developing and maintaining child safe environments. For example, we provide opportunities for children to express their views on our child safe policy and code of conduct and then incorporate this feedback to improve our policies and practices. Ideas from children are sought through suggestion boxes, emails or feedback sessions.

We listen to children and take them seriously, particularly if they are disclosing abuse or concerns for their safety or the safety of other children.

### **Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's review cycle, or as required due to changes in relevant Acts, Laws or should situations arise that require earlier consideration.

