

## HUMAN RESOURCES PRACTICES

### Overview

It is important for schools to have strong human resource practices to help protect children from abuse.

Westall Secondary College fosters a culture of openness and inclusiveness, as well as be aware that people who may wish to harm children could target specific schools. Robust human resource practices are a good way of reducing these risks. Human resource practices include the recruitment, training and supervision of all personnel.

To achieve this, Westall Secondary will provide opportunities for employees and volunteers to develop and maintain skills to ensure child safety. Induction processes will be followed and an Induction Manual will be provided to all new employees, hirers and volunteers to ensure that everyone understands the importance of child safety and wellbeing, and enable them to consistently follow child safety policies and procedures.

### Child safety officer

Employees and volunteers will be supported through the Child Safety Officer or the Principal who are the designated persons to hear or be informed about all allegations or concerns, and provide support to other personnel. This will assist Westall Secondary College in ensuring that child safety is prioritised, and that any allegations of abuse or safety concerns are recorded and responded to consistently and in line with legal requirements, school policies / statements and procedures.

The designated persons also provide contact for children, parents and employees/volunteers to seek advice and support regarding the safety and wellbeing of children associated with Westall Secondary College.

### Training and induction

Training and education is an important tool to help people understand that child safety is everyone's responsibility. Employees and volunteers (in addition to parents/guardians and children) need to be supported to discuss child protection issues and to detect signs of potential child abuse.

Staff will complete the Mandatory Reporting module, receive induction and ongoing training. New staff will be supported and informed when they begin their new role, and existing staff might need to develop new skills and knowledge to meet the requirements of their positions and expand their career options.

Training and support also promotes an awareness of the appropriate standards of care required to be met by employees and volunteers to ensure that the school meets its duty of care when providing services to children.

It is essential that our staff commit to promoting the safety and wellbeing of children, for example by signing our school's code of conduct. Training should enhance the skills and knowledge of our employees and volunteers, and reduce exposure to risks.

Employees and volunteers working with children will receive training in the following areas:

- identifying, assessing and reducing or removing child abuse risks

- understanding our policies and procedures (including the code of conduct and child safe policy)
- knowledge of legislative requirements, such as obligations to report child abuse<sup>1</sup>, reduce and remove known risks of child abuse<sup>2</sup>, and to hold Working with Children Checks<sup>3</sup>
- how to handle a disclosure or suspicion of abuse, including our organisation's reporting guidelines
- cultural awareness training.

Training can be formal such as:

- higher education training and accreditation
- training offered by external organisations
- training developed and delivered internally
- online 'Mandatory Reporting' unit

Training can also be informal such as:

- inviting other professionals to speak at meetings or functions
- inviting local Aboriginal Elders, Aboriginal community controlled organisations and community members to speak at meetings and events
- inviting local culturally and/or linguistically diverse community members to speak at meetings and events
- internal mentoring and coaching.

## **Supervision**

Supervision of employees and volunteers is managed in a way that protects children from abuse and improves accountability and performance, without being onerous or heavy-handed. For instance, where practical, two staff members should be present during activities with children. In particular, children with a disability may require additional supervision.

As a matter of good practice, new employees and volunteers are supervised regularly to ensure they understand their role and learn skills, as well as to check that their behaviour towards children is appropriate. Any warning signs should be reported through appropriate channels, including the school's internal reporting procedures (such as the Child Safety Officer or Principal, the Department of Health and Human Services (child protection), or the Police,) if a child is believed to be at imminent risk.

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<sup>1</sup> The failure to disclose criminal offence requires adults in Victoria to report to police a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child (unless they have a reasonable excuse for not doing so). More information about [failure to disclose](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence) is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <[www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence)>.

Failure to disclose does not change mandatory reporting obligations. Certain professionals are mandatory reporters, meaning they are required to report to the Department of Health and Human Services if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical and sexual abuse. More information about [mandatory reporting](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/intake/overview-of-intake-of-reports-under-the-children,-youth-and-families-act/1122-mandatory-and-other-required-reporting) is available in the *Child protection manual* <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/intake/overview-of-intake-of-reports-under-the-children,-youth-and-families-act/1122-mandatory-and-other-required-reporting](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/intake/overview-of-intake-of-reports-under-the-children,-youth-and-families-act/1122-mandatory-and-other-required-reporting)>.

<sup>2</sup> The failure to protect criminal offence applies to people within organisations who knew of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse by someone in the organisation and had the authority to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so. More information about [failure to protect](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence) is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <[www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence)>.

<sup>3</sup> For more information about [Working with Children checks](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) visit the working with children website <[www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au)>.

### **Code of conduct and disciplinary procedures**

Westall Secondary College has a code of conduct that provides services for children which outlines expected standards of appropriate behaviour with and in the company of children.

An investigation by the Principal will occur if an allegation of child abuse is made, or a breach of the code of conduct is known or suspected.

Disciplinary procedures will be accessible and transparent, and clearly demonstrate the consequences of breaches of the code of conduct.

Employees and volunteers should be aware of reporting and disciplinary procedures and how to communicate concerns regarding the improper behaviour of any person within the school.

Members of our school community should also be made aware (via the school fortnightly newsletter) of their duty to raise concerns about the behaviour of any person who may present a risk of child abuse, without fear of repercussions.

The Westall Secondary College code of conduct is publicly available via our school website. Children and their families will be encouraged to raise any concerns about the behaviour of any person and can expect to be listened to and supported.

Our disciplinary procedures will clearly outline what employees or volunteers should do if they are concerned that their actions or words have been misunderstood, or they believe their concerns are not investigated in a timely manner.

### **Evaluation**

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

This document was ratified by School Council in September 2016