



# ELTHAM HIGH SCHOOL

## POLICY DOCUMENT

### *Child Safe Environments Policy*

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

On 26 November 2015, the Victorian Parliament passed the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015 to introduce seven Child Safe standards (the Standards) into law. The Standards apply to all organisations involved in child-related work in Victoria.

Ministerial Order No. 870 provides the framework for how schools will be required to comply with the Standards. Overall responsibility for ensuring compliance rests with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA).

#### **PHILOSOPHY**

Eltham High School 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. This commitment provides the foundation at Eltham High School upon which decisions are made.

Eltham High School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse children as well as the safety of children with a disability.

Every member of the Eltham High School community 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 every decision and action they participate in.

#### **POLICY STATEMENT**

In its planning, decision-making and operations, Eltham High School will:

- Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
- Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
- Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
- Respect diversity in cultures and child-rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
- Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
- Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
- 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;
- Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
- Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
- Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

## **GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY**

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people. Responsibility for implementing the standards will be held by the school's Executive Leadership team that incorporates the Principal Class members and the Business Manager.

The policy will apply across all school environments including offsite activities such as camps and excursions and events occurring out of school hours.

### **A child-safe culture**

Eltham High School ensures structures are in place that encourage staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

### **Personnel understand their roles and responsibilities/Code of Conduct**

Eltham High School 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 school's Code of Conduct sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. It is available to all staff through the Staff Handbook and will be included in Induction for staff new to the school.

### **Human resources practices and training**

Eltham High School 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.

The school 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**

Eltham High School has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. Immediate action should include reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection or another appropriate agency and notifying the principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns. The school will take action to respond to a complaint.

The school's policy and procedures for reporting a child safety concern or complaint can be found in the school's Child Protection Reporting Policy. The designated Child Safety Officer is the Student Services Leader.

### **Risk reduction and management**

Eltham High School believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach.

The school's approach to Child Safety risk reduction and management can be found in the Camps & Excursions policy.

### **Listening to children**

Eltham High School ensures it is a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/carers. The school 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.

Where there is a need to collect information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct with, or abuse of a child, the school will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (or their parents/carers) informed about progress.

## **Confidentiality and Privacy**

Eltham High School 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 are included in the school's Privacy Policy.

## **Definitions**

Ministerial Order 870 provides definitions, including:

Child abuse includes—

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

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 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 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 means 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).

## **BASIS OF DISCRETION**

The School Council has responsibility for the establishment, evaluation and review of school policies. The School Principal has the responsibility to ensure that school policies are implemented effectively. Minor changes to the policy (changes that will not affect the spirit of the policy) may be made at the discretion of the Principal.

The Policy Review and Evaluation process will recommend any major changes to the policy to School Council.

## **RELATED POLICIES**

**The Education Department's School Policy and Advisory Guide at:**

Duty of Care

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/dutyofcare.aspx>

Child Protection Reporting Obligations

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/childprotection.aspx>

Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people; A joint protocol of the Department of Human Services Child Protection, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Licensed Children's Services

and Victorian Schools, Published by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and Department of Human Services, 2010

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/protectionprotocol.aspx>

Child Safe Standards

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/chilsafestandards.aspx>

Ministerial Order 870

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/schobligationsorder.aspx>

Child Safe Standards

<http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/Pages/default.html>

## **Eltham High School**

**Policies available on the Eltham High School website at**

<https://www.elthamhs.vic.edu.au/documents/index.php?dir=Information+and+Help%2FPolicies%2F>

Student Engagement Policy

Child Protection Reporting Policy

Safe Connections Policy

Bullying Prevention Policy

Camps and Excursions Policy

## **REVIEW**

This policy should be reviewed every 3 years.

Date Updated – September 2019

## **Executive Officer**

Eltham High School Council

CONSULTATION PROCESS AND WORKING PARTY INFORMATION:

This policy was written by: Fran Mullins

Consultation has taken place with the relevant group(s) in the following list:

Group	Consultation ✓
School Operations Committee	
Staff	✓
Students (randomly selected group)	
Parents (randomly selected group)	
Members of the Community	
Other (where relevant please specify)	
Planning and Policy Review Team of Council <b>(Mandatory)</b>	✓
School Council <b>(Mandatory)</b>	

