

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

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Drafted by:	MSV	Approved by Board on:	November 2024
Scheduled review date:	<p>The earlier of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 years; • when changes occur to Act or Ministerial Order; or • when significant child safety incident occurs. 		
Related Documents	Child Safety Reporting Procedure Child Safe Code of Conduct	Child Safety Risk Register Child Safety Incident Report Form	

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Mastery Schools Victoria (the **School** or **MSV**) has no tolerance for child abuse and is committed to promoting and protecting the interests, safety and wellbeing of all children and students.
- 1.2 All Staff at the School are responsible for providing a supportive and safe School Environment where every child and student has a place, a voice and their story is known and respected.
- 1.3 This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (**Policy**), the Child Safety Reporting Procedure (**Procedure**) and Child Safe Code of Conduct (**Code**) have been approved by the MSV Board.
- 1.4 This Policy has been drafted considering the diversity of the School Environment, including but not limited to the needs of children and students who:
 - (a) are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and students;
 - (b) are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
 - (c) are sexually and gender-diverse;
 - (d) have a disability;
 - (e) are unable to live at home; and
 - (f) are vulnerable.
- 1.5 If any person believes a child or student is at immediate risk of abuse or serious harm, **telephone 000** and ask to speak to Victoria Police.

2 Purpose

- 2.1 This policy establishes School's implementation of the Child Safe Standards in the School environment, including our controls and actions to prevent child abuse and harm, promote the safety and wellbeing of children and students and comply with the Ministerial Order 1359 (**MO1359**).
- 2.2 This policy provides an outcome focused organisational response to child safety, ensuring:
 - (a) children and young people are safe, free from harm;
 - (b) ensure everyone knows their responsibilities to prevent and report child abuse and harm;
 - (c) all suspicions, incidents, disclosures and allegations of child abuse are responded to promptly, thoroughly and in a child focused manner;
 - (d) our community members have assurance of the School's commitment to child safety; and

- (e) child safety is a priority of all aspects of the School’s operations.

3 Scope

- 3.1 This Policy applies to all Staff and Volunteers. Staff and Volunteers must comply with the Policy, Procedure and the Code.
- 3.2 This Policy applies in all School Environments. This means it applies whether or not Staff or Volunteers work face-to-face, online or remotely with children.

4 Recognising child abuse

- 4.1 The legal definition of “child abuse” is:
- (a) any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or grooming; and
 - (b) the infliction, on a child, of physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm and the serious neglect of a child.
- 4.2 This includes conduct towards, against, with or in the presence of a child or student and threatening to engage in such conduct. Some examples include:
- (a) forced marriage;
 - (b) family violence;
 - (c) subjecting a child to a change or suppression practice on the basis of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

Type of child abuse	More details and examples
Sexual offence or grooming	Harassment. Compelling sexual touching. Encouraging a child to engage in, or be involved in, sexual activity.
Physical violence or abuse	See indicators of harm below.
Serious emotional and psychological harm	When a child has suffered or is likely to suffer emotional or psychological harm that causes the child’s emotional or intellectual development is or is likely to be, significantly damaged and the child’s parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm.
Serious neglect	Neglect is an omission. Serious harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, medical care.

- 4.3 Indicators of harm can be behavioural or physical. Indicators of harm vary for different types of child abuse and can co-occur with multiple types of child abuse. Examples of indicators of harm include but are not limited to:

Physical violence

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unexplained bruises, burns, welts, cuts grazes or scratches (or vague or unlikely explanations) • avoidance of physical contact, or disproportionate reactions or limited emotion displayed • unexplained absences and decline in academic performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wearing clothing that is unsuitable for the weather conditions (to hide injuries) • substance abuse, self-harm or suicide attempts
Sexual offences	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sexualised behaviours • withdrawal, low self-esteem, suicidal ideation, self-harm • manifestation of psychological diagnoses including anxiety, depression and substance misuse • presence of sexually transmitted diseases • signs of pain, itching or discomfort in the genital or rectal area • frequent urinary tract infections • pregnancy (actual or suspected) • self-mutilation • displaying age-inappropriate sexual behaviour or knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inappropriate expressions of affection • sudden fears of specific places or particular adults • obsessive and compulsive washing • complaining of headaches, stomach pains or nausea • sleeping difficulties • poor self-care or personal hygiene • regressive behaviours such as bedwetting and speech loss • substance abuse, self-harm or suicide attempts
Emotional or psychological harm	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delays in emotional, mental or physical development • speech impairments such as stuttering or being selectively mute • rocking, thumb-sucking or other infantile behaviours • eating disorders • exhibiting high anxiety or symptoms of stress • poor self-image or low self-esteem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • displaying aggressive, demanding or attention-seeking behaviour • compulsive lying or stealing • unexplained mood swings or depression • poor social and interpersonal skills • excessive neatness or cleanliness • substance abuse, self-harm or suicide attempt
Neglect	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent hunger, or stealing or begging for food • Poor hygiene • Lack adequate or suitable clothing • Refusal or reluctance to go home • appearing dirty and unwashed • unattended health problems • appearing pale and weak 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inadequate shelter or unsanitary living conditions • aggressive or self-destructive behaviour • involvement in criminal activity • poor, irregular or non-attendance at school • limited positive interaction with parents, carers or guardians • poor academic performance • substance abuse

5 Statement of commitment to child safety

- 5.1 MSV is committed to providing a safe environment for all children, and preventing child abuse by identifying risks early, removing and reducing these risks. We have no tolerance of child abuse and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently in accordance with our organisational policies and procedures.
- 5.2 We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are concerned about a child's or young person's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- 5.3 All management and staff (Board members, staff and volunteers) of MSV are responsible for protecting the interests and safety of children. This Policy and our other child safe procedures, codes, practices and strategies promote and adhere to MO1359 to prevent and respond to child abuse. Some of the ways in which we support and protect all children are:
- (a) A culture of child safety, from management to participants, including scheduling child safety as an agenda item at monthly Board meetings and weekly staff meetings;
 - (b) A Child Safe policy and two procedures including processes for responding to and reporting all instances of suspected child abuse;
 - (c) Working with Children (WWC) Checks are required for all management and staff (Board members, staff and volunteers);
 - (d) A Code of Conduct for all management and staff (Board members, staff and volunteers) that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children;
 - (e) Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing management and staff (Board members, staff and volunteers), including regular professional development;
 - (f) We are committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks;
 - (g) Following policies and procedures of the Reportable Conduct Scheme through the Commission for Children and Young People.
- 5.4 Any enquiries regarding Child Safety should be directed to a CSO or the Principal.

6 Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Board

- 6.1 The Board is responsible for the detection and prevention of child abuse in School Environments and complying with the Victorian Child Safe Standards

and MO1359. The Board has a **non-delegable duty of care** to children and students at the school.

6.2 The Board's responsibilities include:

- (a) ensuring child safety and wellbeing is embedded in leadership, governance and culture;
- (b) ensuring appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place, including processes to respond to risks, complaints, concerns, disclosures, with regular reviews and evaluation of child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices after any significant child safety incident or at least every two years;
- (c) ensuring complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures and inform continuous improvement;
- (d) implementing policies, procedures and codes of conduct to ensure Staff and Volunteers know how to protect and prevent child abuse, and report it when it occurs or is suspected;
- (e) embedding a culture of child safety and wellbeing that promotes the identification and mitigation of risks;
- (f) monitoring the School's overall compliance with its child safety policies, procedures and practices;
- (g) reviewing the Principal's reports as to the School's child safety practices and compliance; and
- (h) reviewing the CSO's Wellbeing Report, which includes information about incidents, allegations, concerns and disclosures.

Responsibilities of the Principal

6.3 The Principal is responsible for:

- (a) performing the responsibilities of the Head of Entity of the School for the Reportable Conduct Scheme;
- (b) taking all practical measures to ensure this Policy is implemented effectively and that a child safe culture is maintained in all School Environments;
- (c) appointing an investigator to investigate reports of child abuse and harm, and ensuring that the investigation is carried out in accordance with legislative requirements;
- (d) ensuring Staff and Volunteers engaged in child-connected work receive training and information on child safety consistent with this Policy;
- (e) ensuring all adults in the School community are aware of their obligation to report suspected child abuse and harm, or risk of child abuse and harm;

- (f) performing the responsibilities of the Head of Entity under the Reportable Conduct Scheme; and
- (g) providing assurance to the Board that identified risks to child safety have been appropriately assessed, managed and reported (including implementing risk treatments).

Responsibilities of the CSO

6.4 CSOs are responsible for:

- (a) championing child safety;
- (b) assessing the risk of child abuse and harm within their area of control and minimise any risk to the greatest extent possible;
- (c) ensuring risk management processes are in place and operating effectively;
- (d) educating Staff about the prevention and identification of child abuse and harm;
- (e) reporting any risks to child safety to the Principal, and facilitating the reporting of any misconduct, inappropriate behaviour or suspected abuse pursuant to the Procedure;
- (f) helping coordinate responses to child safety and wellbeing incidents;
- (g) promptly responding to a concern or complaint of child abuse, and ensuring concerns and complaints are taken seriously;
- (h) overseeing investigations of complaints and disclosures of child abuse and harm, as directed by the Principal; and
- (i) supporting Staff, Volunteers and others in the community to maintain a child safe School Environment, including by listening, discussing and clarifying issues in relation to child safety.

6.5 CSOs will be supported by the Wellbeing Team of qualified wellbeing support staff.

Responsibilities of Staff

6.6 All Staff have a responsibility to prevent, identify and mitigate risks related to child safety and wellbeing, and must:

- (a) promote child safety and wellbeing at all times, and provide a safe School Environment for children and students;
- (b) read and comply with this Policy and the Child Safety Code of Conduct;
- (c) respond to all reports, allegations, complaints, concerns and disclosures of child abuse and harm, or a risk of child abuse or harm, seriously, in a child-focused manner, with sensitivity and professionalism;

- (d) be observant and report any concerns about actual, suspected or risk of child abuse or harm as soon as possible in accordance with the Procedure;
 - (e) report any breach or suspected breach of this Policy or the Child Safety Code of Conduct in accordance with the Policy and Procedure as soon as possible;
 - (f) cooperate fully with any investigation conducted by the School, DFFH, Victoria Police, law enforcement authorities, regulators, CCYP, or an investigator pursuant to the Reportable Conduct Scheme;
 - (g) create and maintain records of all reportable allegations, complaints, concerns, disclosures, safety incidents, risks, decisions and all actions taken as required by the School's Recordkeeping, Retention and Destruction Policy; and
 - (h) providing support for children at risk or where an allegation, complaint or disclosure has been made.
- 6.7 Staff are strongly encouraged to report child safety concerns to a CSO as soon as possible.
- 6.8 A Staff member who holds a significant concern for the safety or wellbeing of a child or student, or believes on reasonable grounds that a child or student is in need of protection from child abuse:
- (a) may disclose that information to Victoria Police or DFFH; and
 - (b) is strongly encouraged to tell the School (by submitting an *Incident Report Form* as per the Procedure or telling a CSO).

Responsibilities of Volunteers and Visitors

- 6.9 Volunteers and Visitors must:
- (a) promote child safety and wellbeing at all times, and provide a safe School Environment for children and students;
 - (b) read and comply with this Policy, Procedure and the Code;
 - (c) be familiar with their legal obligations with respect to reporting child abuse;
 - (d) be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse;
 - (e) raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with a CSO or the Principal.

7 Culturally safe environments

- 7.1 We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and young people, the cultural safety of children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds. The strategies and actions the School will take to create and maintain a culturally safe environment include:

- (a) respecting and valuing the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued;
- (b) promoting community participation to value diversity and inclusiveness
- (c) priding ourselves on providing a space where all individuals can feel safe to engage, learn and build connections;
- (d) supporting and respecting all children and young people, as well as our staff and volunteers;
- (e) supporting the participation and inclusion of Aboriginal students, their families and communities by encouraging applications (for employment and enrolment) from Aboriginal peoples;
- (f) recognising the importance of Aboriginal culture, identity and safety in our child safe approach, responses to disclosures and in the development of our curriculum;
- (g) ensuring Aboriginal students and their community have a voice by providing a safe space to be heard;
- (h) equipping staff, students, volunteers and the Board to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and students, through training as part of onboarding and induction and professional development;
- (i) collaborating with local indigenous groups to work to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan;
- (j) having measures in place to ensure racism is recognised, opposed and under no circumstances tolerated (see the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy). Any instances of racism within the School environment are addressed with serious and appropriate consequences (see the Behaviour Management Policy).

7.2 We want students, children and young people to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children and young people, as well as our staff and volunteers.

8 Organisational leadership

8.1 The MSV Board is ultimately responsible for ensuring child safety within the School. The MSV Board takes this responsibility incredibly seriously. The MSV Board ensures child safety at the School with the following strategies:

- (a) this Policy is publicly available on the MSV website, as is our Commitment to child safety;
- (b) child safety is a standard item on MSV internal teacher monthly meetings related to any student operations or interactions – minutes

are stored electronically and circulated to staff to review after each meeting;

- (c) child safety is a standard agenda item on all MSV Board meetings—minutes are stored electronically and circulated to board members after each meeting;
- (d) the Principal and CSO report to the MSV Board on child safety matters, including any risks identified specific to the School's environment, activities to be conducted and the characteristics of students, and risk controls and treatments implemented;
- (e) the Principal and CSO are responsible for monitoring compliance with this Child Safety Policy and the Reporting Procedure;
- (f) in circumstances where a complaint or concern is about the Principal, the Chair of the Board will assume all duties and responsibilities with respect to the complaint or concern as set out in this Child Safety Policy and the Reporting Procedure;
- (g) staff and Board members participate in regular and ongoing online and face to face training around the topic of Child Safety, including PD days which feature interactive training opportunities;
- (h) child safety is embedded into the staff induction and onboarding procedures;
- (i) CSOs conduct PD Session throughout the year at staff PD days—attendance records are maintained electronically; and
- (j) the School conducts performance reviews every six months, and child safe behaviour and conduct is monitored as part of these reviews. However, the School will not wait for the performance review date to address any allegations, speculations, or reports pertaining to that staff member and a child safety concern. Staff are continuously reviewed, both informally and formally.

9 Code of Conduct

- 9.1 The School has a Code of Conduct – Child Safe (**Code**). This document outlines the behavioural expectations of Staff and Volunteers when working with children to reduce the risk of child abuse. Staff and Volunteers must agree to abide by our **Code**. We take into consideration contributions Staff, Volunteers, families, children and young people in the ongoing development of our Code.

10 Risk management strategies

- 10.1 The School is focused on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to child safety. We do this by:

- (a) the CSOs meeting fortnightly to discuss, document and review any Child Safety matters with actions and potential risks reported to the Principal and Chair;
- (b) promoting a culture for all Staff, Volunteers, parents, carers and children to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns;
- (c) taking into account school's environment, the activities expected to be conducted in those environments (including the provision of services by contractors or outside organisations), and the characteristics and needs of all children and students expected to be present in those environments when implementing and reviewing risk controls and risk treatments;
- (d) keeping a record of identified risks and the actions taken (risk controls, risk treatments); and
- (e) reviewing the risks related to child safety identified at the school annually to evaluate the effectiveness of risk controls.

11 Child and student empowerment

- 11.1 The School recognises children and young people are vital and active participants in our organisation. The School empowers children by:
- (a) taking into consideration the opinions of children and young people and use their opinions to develop child safety policies and procedures;
 - (b) taking into consideration the age and literacy of our students and community in developing our procedures to respond to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse;
 - (c) advising students how to access sexual abuse prevention programs, through engagement with wellbeing sessions, curriculum and teaching and student voice programs;
 - (d) providing students with a safe space in which they can communicate and express their views in order to raise awareness or their concerns;
 - (e) giving students onsite access to wellbeing support and ensuring students are aware support is available if they are feeling unsafe, for example, protect posters are displayed in prominent places throughout School;
 - (f) informing students of their rights and their responsibilities;
 - (g) through training, encouraging staff and Volunteers to facilitate participation and be responsive to the input of children and students;
 - (h) giving students the skills to recognise unsafe situations and the confidence to speak up about worries relating to themselves or others;
 - (i) reinforcing connections between students, Staff and Volunteers; and

- (j) promoting student friendships and peer support to ensure a sense of belonging through implementing wellbeing in the curriculum and our student Code of Conduct.

12 Family engagement

- 12.1 Families and the community are welcome to contribute to policies and procedures, they play a vital role to monitor and promote child safety through supporting awareness and expressing concerns. The School encourages families to provide feedback on any organisational policy or procedure.
- 12.2 The School provides opportunities for parents and families to contribute through surveys, emails and shared news. The School also informs families, carers and the school community about the operations and governance of the School related to child safety and wellbeing, partly through this Policy, and through communication such as shared news via the school's fortnightly newsletter and MSV parent lounge on Facebook.
- 12.3 The CSO:
 - (a) communicates with parents/caregivers to provide information in an accessible and respectful manner;
 - (b) will engage in conversations with families and external organisations who may need to be informed in relation to student safety; and
 - (c) facilitates parents and carers being involved in decision about their child in all circumstances where decisions are made related to child safety and wellbeing which affects their child.
- 12.4 We also make our Child Safety Reporting Procedure and Complaints Policy publicly available on the School's website so our community understand the procedure for making complaints or raising concerns related to child safety.

13 Diversity and equity

- 13.1 We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular, the School and all our staff:
 - (a) promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and young people;
 - (b) promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds;
 - (c) promote the safety of children and young people with a disability;
 - (d) ensure children with a disability are safe and can participate equally;
 - (e) promote the safety and empowerment of LGBTIQ+ children and young people; and

- (f) pay particular attention to these students and any other students who may be vulnerable for any other reason.

14 Suitable staff and volunteers

Recruitment

- 14.1 All applicants for jobs that involve child-connected work for the school must be informed about the child safety practices of the school (including the Code of Conduct). MSV takes all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children and young people. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety. MSV understands that, when recruiting Staff and Volunteers, we have ethical and legislative obligations including informed applicants of our Child Safety Code of Conduct. All position descriptions outline our commitment and expectations to child safety and the level of responsibility and supervision associated with the position.
- 14.2 Our advertisements for all roles include:
 - (a) The job's requirements, duties, and responsibilities regarding child safety and wellbeing; and
 - (b) The job occupant's essential or relevant qualification, experience and attributes in relation to child safety and wellbeing.
- 14.3 All staff, Board members and volunteers will receive training on their information sharing and record keeping obligations. When engaging volunteers to undertake child-connected work, volunteers are made aware of the child safety and wellbeing policy and child safety code of conduct of the school.
- 14.4 The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy as a document is to be provided to school staff, members of MSV Board, and volunteers engaged in child-connected work as part of the induction process.

Ongoing Suitability

- 14.5 All Staff and Volunteers must have a Working with Children Check or equivalent background check (i.e., a VIT registration). The school will request to sight, verify and record the WWCC, VIT or equivalent.
- 14.6 For child-related work (i.e., direct contact):
 - (a) for Staff, the School will *always* collect and record proof of the person's identity, information about their qualification, the person's history of work involving children and references for the person's suitability.
 - (b) for Volunteers or Staff engaged in work *without* direct contact, the School *may* collect and record this information.

Screening

- 14.7 We carry out reference checks prior to appointing new persons to ensure that we are recruiting suitable applicants. All recruitment documentation including but not limited to reference checks and copies of qualifications, Working with Children Checks are stored securely for evidence and compliance.
- 14.8 If the recruitment process indicates a person has a criminal history, the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.
- 14.9 All staff engaged in working with children or young people will be supervised appropriately to ensure conduct towards children and young people is safe and appropriate. Staff are monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability on an ongoing basis. We allocate coaches to teachers who, at times, sit in on their classes to support performance development from all angles.

Induction

- 14.10 All Staff, Volunteers and Board members are inducted into MSV and provided with appropriate information regarding our child safety processes and requirements. Part of a new employee and board member induction is that staff sign a declaration confirming they have read and understood School policies, including all child safety related policies and Codes.
- 14.11 This supports Staff to understand the nature and signs of abuse, including the definition of harm and the types of child abuse.
- 14.12 Induction includes information about our Child Safety Code of Conduct and Procedures for responding to complaints and concerns of child abuse.

Ongoing supervision

- 14.13 Ongoing supervision and people management of Staff and Volunteers focuses on child safety and wellbeing.
- 14.14 New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children and young people from abuse. This includes checking that their behaviour towards children and young people is safe and appropriate (please refer to this organisation's *Code of Conduct* to understand appropriate behaviour further). This is not limited to the teaching team, anyone who interact with a student will be assessed to ensure the School provide a safe environment for all students.

15 Complaint processes

- 15.1 To make it clear how the School meets its child safety reporting obligations, we have a Child Safety Reporting Procedure, which is our procedure for responding to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse.

- 15.2 We have a publicly available *Complaints Handling Policy* that is to help children and families understand how we will handle complaints, including child safety complaints. Our complaint-handling processes are child-focused and culturally safe.

How to make a complaint about child safety

- 15.3 Any person may make a complaint, raise a concern, identify a child safety risk or make a disclosure about an incident about child safety at the School to a School representative they trust, such as a Child Safety Officer, the Principal of the School or Chairperson of MSV Board.
- 15.4 The school representative may ask you for some details about the complaint, or ask you to put this in writing for our records.
- 15.5 The CSO is primarily responsible for resolving child safety complaints. These may be escalated to the Principal of the School or Chairperson of MSV Board.
- 15.6 All staff and volunteers are trained in the complaints handling process and understand the obligation to take all concerns that are raised with serious intent and provide a culturally safe environment. Any reportable obligations are to be immediately directed to the CSO.

Taken Seriously

- 15.7 MSV takes all complaints or concerns about child safety seriously and responds to these promptly and thoroughly.
- 15.8 We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. We also make records of our responses to these complaints and risk treatments. All records are securely stored online within the Compass (the School's student management) and any hard copies of documentation are shredded immediately following the upload to Compass. All shredding bins are locked and the contents securely disposed of through a service provider.
- 15.9 We work collaboratively with regulators and the police and may report concerns to relevant regulators. All reports of child abuse are reported to authorities as per the Child Safety Reporting Procedure.
- 15.10 If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children, young people and families on progress and any actions we take.

16 Child safety knowledge, skills and awareness

- 16.1 Training and supervision are important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility, not just Teachers.

- 16.2 A training register of attendance is maintained, for annual organisational training, including all staff and volunteers during professional development sessions relating to the following policies:
- (a) Child Safe Policy;
 - (b) Child Safe Statement;
 - (c) Child Safe Code of Conduct;
 - (d) Child Safe Reporting Procedure;
 - (e) Obligations of information sharing and record keeping; and
 - (f) Complaints and Grievances.

Staff training

- 16.3 At MSV, we work with students who have a diverse range of circumstances. The School is registered as a specialist school therefore potential students and their parents/guardians are interviewed by the School's Principal, Assistant Principal before enrolment. The interviewing team are trained on how to provide support and respond to vulnerable students.
- 16.4 All Staff are trained to recognise and identify the indicators of abuse in students and children of all cultures. They are instructed on how to implement this Policy, the Code, the Reporting Procedure and inform the appropriate welfare staff members.
- 16.5 All staff are trained annually on:
- (a) identifying indicators of child abuse and harm;
 - (b) how to support a person making a disclosure about harm to a child;
 - (c) how to respond to issues of child safety including internal and external reporting requirements, notifying families and carers and managing risks to children;
 - (d) how to support cultural safety;
 - (e) recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students;
 - (f) responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm (i.e., the HEARTS method included in the Child Safety Reporting Procedure);
 - (g) information sharing and recordkeeping obligations (including MARAM);
 - (h) how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school's environment without compromising a child or student's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities;
 - (i) recognising types of child abuse, including:
 - (i) grooming;

- (ii) physical abuse and harm;
 - (iii) sexual abuse and sexual misconduct;
 - (iv) serious emotional and psychological abuse and harm; and
 - (v) serious neglect.
- 16.6 We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse, are a victim of abuse and/or if they notice inappropriate behaviour. This is partly by sharing our Child Safety Reporting Procedure with the school community and having a CSO who is approachable and known in the community.
- 16.7 Child safe matters are regularly discussed in meetings and training is provided during annual Professional Development days. MSV deeply values ongoing development of our teaching staff. Staff receive training consistently throughout the year which is recorded and logged in a training register overseen by the Principal.

Volunteer training

- 16.8 The Principal determines what induction and training is suitable and appropriate to volunteers' roles and responsibilities at the School. The suitable and appropriate training for volunteers is training that supports volunteers to implement this policy and the school's other child safety strategies. The Principal must also consider whether or not it is reasonable and necessary to include training and information on guidance about how volunteers can contribute to building culturally safe environments for children and Students. While Board members are also volunteers, they have specific training requirements separately established by this Policy.
- 16.9 Training must consider the suitability and appropriateness of:
- (a) this Policy and the Child Safety Code of Conduct;
 - (b) how to recognise indicators of child abuse and harm (including harm caused by other children and students);
 - (c) how to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and support colleagues who disclose harm;
 - (d) how to facilitate child-friendly ways for children and students to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns;
 - (e) obligations they have relating to information sharing and recordkeeping; and
 - (f) how to identify and manage child safety risks relevant to their role, without compromising a child or student's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.
- 16.10 Volunteers are generally invited to attend Staff training and PD sessions.

Board training

- 16.11 The Board receives annual training on:
- (a) individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for child safety and managing the risk of child abuse;
 - (b) child safety risks in the School Environment; and
 - (c) MSV's policies, procedures and practices for child safety.

17 Sharing of Information

- 17.1 All staff undertake MARAM training in relation to sharing information and the wellbeing team understand their obligations under the Child Sharing Information Scheme (CISS). Under the CISS, the School is authorised to share information with other authorised bodies (known as Information Sharing Entities) to support child wellbeing or safety. The CISS has expanded legal permissions for professionals to share and request information from other professionals.
- 17.2 The CISS aims to support schools (and other organisations working with children, young people and families) to gain a complete view of the children and young people they work with, making it easier to identify wellbeing or safety needs earlier, and to act on them sooner. This helps MSV ensure students receive the best support possible across services.
- 17.3 If Staff or Volunteers think additional information from a student's doctor or previous school will help meet the duty of care, they can speak to a CSO about requesting this information.

18 Child safety in physical and online environments

- 18.1 In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children and young people in all School Environments.

Online safety

- 18.2 Teaching students about child safety risks in the online environment is embedded into educational curriculum and discussed with students in a safe and open classroom setting. Students and staff are exposed to information delivered by external experts in the field and provided with question time opportunities.
- 18.3 Refer to the Online Safety Policy.

Physical environments

- 18.4 Staff must sign and adhere to the Code of Conduct, which incorporates use of devices in an online environment.

- 18.5 We have a risk management strategy in place to identify, assess and take steps to minimise child abuse risks. This includes reviewing and acting on risks posed by physical environments, where applicable. (Refer to Camps and excursion policy.)
- 18.6 When procuring use of facilities and services from third parties, staff must consider how the safety and students and children will be ensured. Staff can speak to a CSO when arranging excursions for assistance.

Review and implementation

- 18.7 This Policy and the Procedure is reviewed by the Board at least every two years, and/or following significant incidents or reports. Complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures to inform the School's continuous improvement. We also reflect on best practice and use this to inform reviews. Reports as to incidents, complaints, concerns, and general implementation of this Policy are provided to the Board as the school governing authority responsible for the implementation of MO1359.
- 18.8 The review process must be supported by consultation with the school community and the Principal.
- 18.9 We encourage contributions from families, children and young people about our child safe strategies at any time. Where possible, we endeavour to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability. Organisational reports on the findings of relevant reviews are available to staff and volunteers, community and families, and children and young people.
- 18.10 This policy was created in line with MO1359.
- 18.11 The policy is available to staff and volunteers, students and parents/guardians on MSV's website and the intranet.

19 Record Keeping and Retention of Records

- 19.1 As per the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV), the school is responsible for creating, managing and disposing of school child safe and administration and student records.
- 19.2 The School recognises that recordkeeping and information sharing are important tools for the prevention and mitigation of child safety risks.
- 19.3 The School is responsible for creating, managing and appropriately disposing of public records in accordance with the *Public Records Act 1973 (Vic)*, standards issued by PROV and policy and guidance issued by DET.

Record Creation and Retention

- 19.4 The School's wellbeing team must establish a clear procedure to create full and accurate records of any child safe related activities or reports, on the COMPASS Student Management System. The wellbeing team manages these records and an internal register of any child safe reports. The wellbeing team files in this format are restricted to access by the wellbeing team only and the Principal.
- 19.5 The School adheres to the recommendation that records relating to child sexual abuse that has occurred or is alleged to have occurred be retained for at least 45 years after the incident. However, this may not be sufficient, as it may reasonably be assumed that these records will be required in future legal proceedings.
- 19.6 In respect to incidents or allegations of child sexual abuse, the wellbeing team must:
- (a) Ensure full and accurate records are created to document all aspects of the allegation and investigation. These records must be properly managed, protected and retained over time.
 - (b) Carefully consider which records might reasonably be required in the case of an allegation being made in the future and ensure they are properly managed and retained. An allegation may be made many years after an incident. Being able to find and access authentic, informative and reliable records is likely to be critical to the investigation.
- 19.7 The wellbeing team must store the records securely so that they cannot be lost, damaged, altered or tampered with over time. The wellbeing team must store the records confidentially so that privacy is protected, and only authorised people are aware of them and can access and use them for legitimate purposes.

Disposal of Records

- 19.8 Records must only be disposed of with written approval of the school's Principal, after the minimum retention period has been met. (Note: short-term information created through normal administrative practice can be destroyed without needing the written approval of the Principal).
- 19.9 Further detail can be found at;
[creating managing and retaining records of child sexual abuse final 0.pdf \(prov.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.prov.vic.gov.au/creating-managing-and-retaining-records-of-child-sexual-abuse-final-0.pdf)

20 Definitions

Term	Definition
Associated	This includes all children on School campus' and those accessing MSV's learning in the online environment, including but not limited to students and children of staff and students.

Term	Definition
Aboriginal	The term 'Aboriginal' in this document includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is important to be respectful of how individual children, students, their families and community refer to themselves, and use appropriate language when referring to individuals or communities. Source: Ministerial Order 1359
Board	means the MSV Board because the Board is the proprietor of the School and the school governing authority for the purpose of MO1359. The Board is also the "governing body", for the purpose of the <i>Education and Training Reform Act 2006</i> (Vic) because it is responsible for the governance, conduct or management of the School.
CCYP	the Commission for Children and Young People.
Child or children	includes a child or young person who is under the age of 18 years unless otherwise defined by law or noted in this Policy or Procedure. A young person is a child aged 10-17 years old. For simplicity, this Policy refers to children to include students and young people.
Child Safety	Child safety includes 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 suspicions, incidents, disclosures or allegations of child abuse Source: Ministerial Order 1359
Child Abuse	means: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or grooming; and • the infliction, on a child, of physical violence or serious emotional or psychological harm; and • the serious neglect of a child. Source: <i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005</i> (Vic)
Child Abuse - Emotional	Emotional child abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated, or frightened by threats. It also includes hostility, derogatory name-calling and put-downs, and persistent coldness from a person to the extent that the child suffers, or is likely to suffer, emotional or psychological harm to their physical or developmental health Source: PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools
Child Abuse - Physical	Physical child abuse is any non-accidental infliction of physical violence on a child by any person. It can be inflicted in many ways, including beating, shaking or burning and assault with implements and female genital mutilation. Source: PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools
Child Abuse - Sexual	Child sexual abuse is when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve them in sexual activity. It can include a wide range of sexual activity. Sexual offences are governed by the Crimes Act 1958

Term	Definition
	Source: PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools
Child Safe Standards	Refers to the eleven Victorian Child Safe Standards (2022) regulated by the CCYP.
Child safety	includes 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 suspicions, incidents, disclosures or allegations of child abuse. Source: Ministerial Order 1359.
Child-connected work	means work authorised by the School Board and performed by an adult in the School Environment while children or students are present or reasonably expected to be present. Source: Ministerial Order 1359.
Child-related work	means (among other things) work at educational institutions or homestay accommodation that usually involved direct contact with a child. Source: <i>Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)</i>
CISS	means Child Information Sharing Scheme.
CSO	means Child Safety Officer.
DFFH	means the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, which includes Child Protection.
Grooming	Grooming is when a person engages in predatory behaviour to formulate a relationship and prepare a child or young person for sexual activity at a later time. Grooming can include communicating or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent or carer.
Governing Body	means, in relation to a non-Government school, the person or body responsible for the governance, conduct or management of the school – which for the School is the Board of MSV. Source: <i>Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic)</i>
Mandatory Reporter	includes the Principal and Assistant Principal, registered teachers, registered nurses, psychologist, and assistant teachers and support workers (who are qualified as youth, social or welfare workers). This does not include undergraduates, but undergraduates can voluntarily report. Source: section 184 of the <i>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)</i> .
MO1359	means the Ministerial Order 1359.
Neglect	Neglect includes a failure to provide a child with an adequate standard of nutrition, medical care, clothing, shelter or supervision. The law differentiates between three different levels of neglect: 'Minor' neglect is low-level neglect that is trivial or temporary.

Term	Definition
	<p>'Significant' neglect is medium-level neglect that causes harm to a child that is more than trivial or temporary.</p> <p>Serious' neglect is the highest level of neglect. It involves the continued failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life and can also occur if an adult fails to adequately ensure the safety of a child exposed to extremely dangerous or life-threatening situations.</p> <p>Source: PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools</p>
Policy	means this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
Procedure	means the Child Safety Reporting Procedure.
Student	<p>means a person who is enrolled at or attends the School.</p> <p>Source: Ministerial Order 1359</p>
School	means Mastery Schools Victoria, or MSV.
School Environment	<p>means any of the following physical, online or virtual places, used during or outside school hours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the campus of the School located at Terrace 14, 14 Terrace Way, McLeod VIC 3085; • online or virtual School environments made available or authorised by the School Board for use by a child, young person or student (including email, social media, intranet systems, software applications, collaboration tools, and online services); and • other locations provided by the school or through a third-party provider for a child, young person or student to use including, but not limited to, locations used for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – camps; – parts of La Trobe University made available to students by MSV; – approved homestay accommodation; – delivery of education and training such as registered training organisations, TAFEs, non-school senior secondary providers or another school; or – sporting events, excursions, competitions or other events.
School Staff	<p>means, in a non-Government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority • a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary) engaged by the school governing authority to perform child-related work • a minister of religion, a religious leader or an employee or officer of a religious body associated with the school. <p>Source: Ministerial Order 1359</p>
Reasonable belief	<p>A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a child states they have been physically or sexually abused;

Term	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a child states they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves); • someone who knows a child states the child has been physically or sexually abused; • professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused; • signs of abuse lead to a belief the child has been physically or sexually abused; or • a report has been made of a sexual relationship with a child under 16.
Reportable Conduct Scheme or RCS	is the scheme which requires the School to respond to allegations of child abuse and child-related misconduct made against Staff and Volunteers, to notify CCYP of those allegations, and enable CCYP to oversee the School's responses to these allegations.
Working with Children Check	A legislative requirement and process of assessment as prescribed in the <i>Worker Screening Act 2020</i> (Vic) and subsequent Regulations as amended from time to time.
Worker Screening	<p>Worker screening refers to the process of ensuring that only suitable people work with children. It involves gathering a range of information, including but not limited to a Working with Children clearance and qualifications relevant to the role being performed by staff and volunteers.</p> <p>Source: Ministerial Order 1359</p>
Vulnerable	<p>Vulnerable students may include but are not limited to those who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) are deemed vulnerable by a government agency, funded family service or family violence service, or assessed as requiring education and care outside the family home (b) are identified as vulnerable as a result of a referral from a government agency, funded family service or family violence service, homeless or youth justice service; or mental health or other health service (c) self-identify or are identified by school staff or school boarding premises staff as a member of a vulnerable cohort. <p>Source: Ministerial Order 1359</p>
School Community	<p>The School Community includes the following people and organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • staff members; • students; • members of the MSV Board; and • contractors and organisations engaged by MSV, including subcontractors; and • parents and guardians or students.
Volunteers	includes a person who performs work without remuneration or reward for the School in the School Environment, including Board members.