Child Safe Policy

Rationale

- The child safe standards require organisations including schools that provide services for children to have a child safe policy or a statement of commitment to child safety.
- A child safe policy is an overarching document that provides an overview of the key elements of an organisation's approach to child safety. It should:
    - Clearly state the organisation's zero tolerance of child abuse.
    - Detail the organisation's child safe processes and procedures, or link to existing documents that include child safety considerations - for example, reporting procedures (including leadership responsibilities), how to respond to an allegation of child abuse, human resources and recruitment practices, and risk management strategy and procedures.
    - Clearly state the organisation's commitment to cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.
    - Detail expectations and requirements of staff and volunteers to ensure the protection of children, and the training and support staff receive.
    - Include contact details for people to access information in relation to child safety, such as the Child Safety Officer. A Child Safety Officer is a person in the organisation who has knowledge of child safety issues, and could be a point of contact for others who have questions or concerns or want to report an allegation of child abuse. The organisation may consider including child safety officer/champion duties in the person's job description.
    - Include how and when the policy and other child safety tools are reviewed to help the organisation improve.
- The school acknowledges that this policy is one of twelve standards relating to the school's child safe environment.
- The school further acknowledges that a child safe culture will not develop in the short term.

Responsibilities

- To ensure Epping Secondary College demonstrates its commitment to fostering a child safe environment.
- To raise awareness within the school community of the importance of child safety.
- To further empower students who are key stakeholders within our organisation.

- To ensure the school develops and publishes a child safe policy that is compliant with the Child Safe Standard 2.
- To ensure the school discharges its duty of care towards students.

Implementation

- This school is committed to child safety.
- We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff, volunteers and the parent community.
- We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children if applicable, to the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.
- We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- Any staff member who believes that a child is at immediate risk of abuse must phone 000.
- Our school is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- Our school has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- Our school is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.
- The school's Child Safe Policy will be publicly available to help raise awareness about the importance of child safety in our organisation and demonstrate our commitment to protecting children from abuse.
- It will be published on the school's website and provided to new families on enrolment.
- New staff will be provided with a copy and briefed on the school's attitude to child safety as part of the induction process.
- We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute to the development and review of this policy. Where applicable we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Our Children

This policy is intended to empower and protect our children who are vital and active participants in the school. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children (if applicable).
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.

- Ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally in all aspects of school life.

Our Staff and Volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with the children in our school.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Staff Code of Conduct.

Training and Supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in the school understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our school culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse, to promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our philosophy and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through the Principal or Assistant Principal or directly to the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

The school takes all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our school understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. The Principal may request a criminal records check.

Fair Procedures for Personnel

Whilst the safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern, we also are fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to families (as appropriate) on progress and any actions we take.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they are staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative Responsibilities

The school takes its legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- Failure to disclose: Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- Failure to protect: People of authority will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

All teachers are mandatory reporters and must comply with their responsibilities.

Non-teaching staff have an obligation to report if they form a reasonable belief that a child is at risk of harm.

Risk Management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in our school on social media).

Please refer also to the school's existing policies all of which are designed to create a safe environment for children:

Care Arrangements

Duty of Care

Critical Incident Plan

Emergency Procedures

Privacy

ICT Acceptable Use

Mandatory Reporting

Staff Code of Conduct

Student Wellbeing & Engagement

Onsite Supervision

Procedures to Maintain Registers

School Philosophy

Review	This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's 3 year review cycle, following a significant incident if it occurs or if guidelines change (latest information late February 2016).
Ratified	This policy was ratified by School Council on…