

Healesville High School

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy



Purpose

Child safety¹ and wellbeing² is the responsibility of all schools as every child deserves to grow and develop in an educational environment that builds confidence, friendships, security and happiness irrespective of a person's family background. Healesville High School is committed to child safety and wellbeing and our core values of respect, responsibility, teamwork and relationships intend to ensure that students feel safe, supported and protected in their educational environment, allowing them to learn and grow to their full potential (also see the **Student Engagement Policy**).

Healesville High School is committed to the following to ensure child safety and wellbeing is a priority;

- Zero tolerance to child abuse³ and bullying⁴ (including but not limited to harassment⁵ and cyber bullying⁶), all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our structured policies and procedures.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety.
- We will endeavour to prevent and identify risks of child abuse and/or bullying early and remove or reduce the risk immediately.
- Our human resources and recruitment practices support our commitment to protecting our students from child abuse and bullying.
- We support and respect all children, along with our staff and volunteers.
- We are committed to the cultural safety and wellbeing of aboriginal children, children from linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability.
- We have specific policies, procedures and training in place to support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to assist in the achievement of these commitments.

Our students

¹ **Child safety**: encompasses matter 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 (Ministerial Order No. 870 definition – www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafesite).

² **Student wellbeing**: student wellbeing is a student's level of satisfaction about the quality of their life at school. Wellbeing is characterised by positive feelings and attitude, positive relationships with other students and teachers, resilience and satisfaction with self and learning experiences at school.

³ **Child abuse includes –**

- Any act committed against a child involving -
 - A sexual offence or
 - An offence under section 49B(2) of the *Crimes Act 1958* (grooming)
- The infliction, on a child, of –
 - Physical violence or
 - Serious emotional or psychological harm
- Serious neglect of a child (Ministerial Order No. 870 definition – www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafesite).

⁴ **Bullying** – is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological aggression by a person or group directed towards a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group that is intended to cause, distress or fear. For full description see <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/what.aspx>

⁵ **Harassment** – the act of systematic and/or continued unwanted and annoying actions of one party or a group, including threats and demands.

⁶ **Cyberbullying** – bullying which is carried out through the internet or mobile devices. For full description see <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/cyberbullying.aspx>

HHS – Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

This policy not only demonstrates Healesville High School’s commitment to child safety and wellbeing, it is intended to empower our students who are a vital and active part of our educational community. Students will be involved in making decisions, especially about matters that relate directly to them, initially through our student leadership team, student voice participants and then the broader student community.

Healesville High School will promote diversity and tolerance; people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome.

Students of Healesville High School must abide by our **Student Code of Conduct**. Students have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

Students will be educated about child safety and wellbeing (see the **Curriculum Policy**).

Our staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with students in our organisation.

All staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our **Staff Code of Conduct** which specifies clearly the standards of conduct required when working with students. All staff, volunteers, students and family are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

Training and Supervision

Child safety and student wellbeing is the responsibility of everyone in the school community from staff, students through to the broader school community (ie. volunteers and parents). Training and support will promote awareness of the appropriate standard of care required to ensure that we meet our duty of care when providing services to our students.

Healesville High School aims to ensure that staff, students and the broader school community feel confident, comfortable and supported in discussing any potential allegations of child safety, bullying and wellbeing concerns. Our staff and volunteers will be trained to identify, assess and minimise risks of child abuse and bullying, along with the ability to detect potential signs of child abuse and bullying.

Not only will staff (including volunteers and school council members), students and parents be made aware of the school’s codes of conduct, staff (including volunteers) will be provided with training to enhance their skills and knowledge, thus reducing exposure to risks. Students will be involved in education to increase their understanding of child safety through our curriculum⁷.

Staff employees, volunteers and school council members will receive training in the following areas on an annual basis;

- How to develop positive relationships with students,
- Identifying and understanding the process to follow when a student is a wellbeing concern (ie. Negative attitude towards learning, negative relationships, high absenteeism),
- Identifying, assessing and reducing or removing child abuse and bullying risks,
- Identifying and understanding the policies and procedures which impact child safety and bullying (ie code of conduct, child safety and wellbeing policy),
- Understand the legislative requirements, such as obligations to report child abuse⁸, reduce and remove the risks of known child abuse⁹, and to hold Working with Children Checks¹⁰ where required,

⁷ See Curriculum policy.

⁸ 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’ is available on the Department of Justice website www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence

NOTE: Failure to report 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’ is available in the *Child Protection Manual*

HHS – Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

- Develop an understanding of how to handle a disclosure or suspicion of abuse, including the school's procedures,
- Cultural awareness training.

At Healesville High School training may include;

- Training from external organisations,
- Training developed and delivered internally,
- Mentoring and coaching, and/or
- Professional Speakers.

New employees and volunteers will be provided with a staff handbook which contains relevant documentation in relation to child safety and bullying. New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school's commitment to child safety and bullying, also checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through the appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Additionally, the school completes the required Performance and Development Process which allows for opportunities to monitor a teacher's effectiveness and capability to provide a supportive and safe environment for students to learn, along with the opportunity to gain feedback to enable their continued development as an educator.

Recruitment/Employment

Healesville High School takes all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with our students. Selection criteria and advertisements are developed to clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

All potential employees (including volunteers) are required to hold a Working with Children Check¹¹ and provide evidence of this Check.

Reference checks and police record checks will be carried out to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information.

For more detail see the **Recruitment/Employment Policy** and the **Ensuring Safety and Welfare of Students with External Providers Policy and Procedures**.

Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of our students is the primary concern. It is also important to ensure that we are fair and just to all employees and volunteers. This will occur through the following of all policies and procedures and when required, incidents will be fully investigated and assessed, disciplinary action will be thorough, transparent and based on evidence.

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

⁹ 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 on 'failure to protect' 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

¹⁰ For more information about 'Working with Children Checks' visit the website www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au

¹¹ For further information see www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au

HHS – Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

All allegations of abuse, safety and welfare concerns will be recorded using our incident reporting form¹². All records will be securely stored.

Where an allegation of child abuse, safety or welfare concern is raised, updates will be provided to children and families on the progress and any actions which will be taken, subject to privacy.

Privacy

Healesville High School is committed to protecting the personal and health information that we collect, use and disclose. This policy supports and reflects the Department of Education and Training's Privacy Policy¹³ in relation to the need to collect information and the right of the individual to privacy. We will ensure that the collection of personal and health information will be necessary for our services and functions, while recognising the right of individuals to have their information handled in ways that they would reasonably expect and in ways that protect their personal and health information.

Healesville High School has adopted the Information and Health Privacy Principles in the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic) and the *Health Records Act 2001* (Vic) as minimum standards when dealing with personal and health information. This means that, subject to some exceptions, we will not act, or engage in a practice, that contravenes an Information and/or Health Privacy Principle in respect of personal and/or health information collected, held, managed, used, disclosed or transferred by it.

Legislative responsibilities

Healesville High School takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including but not limited to the following:

- **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.¹⁴
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation 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.¹⁵
- Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties.¹⁶

Risk Management

Management of risk is the responsibility of everyone. Government organisations in Victoria are required to protect students when a risk is identified, therefore we will ensure that all employees and volunteers proactively manage risks of abuse to students.

¹² See appendix 1

¹³ For further information on the Department of Education and Trainings Privacy Poly see <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/privacypolicy.aspx>

¹⁴ A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed. For further information about the failure to disclose offence is available at www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-disclose-offence

¹⁵ Further information about the failure to protect offence and who are 'people of authority' is available at

www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-protect-offence

¹⁶ Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers, principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse. See the Department of Health and Human Services website for further information at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first

The **Risk Management Policy** outlines how to identify, assess and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which includes risks posed by the physical environment and online environment (see **Responsible Use of Technology Policy**).

Regular Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they are to occur. The contribution of families and students will be sought, along with the input of Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Allegations, concerns and complaints – Procedure – child abuse, bullying and/or wellbeing concern

Allegations, concerns and complaints will be taken seriously. We have clear practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Staff and volunteers at Healesville High School are trained to deal appropriately with allegations, concerns and complaints.

Our training and communication processes will ensure that all students, families, employees and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and they notice inappropriate behaviour inside or outside of the classroom (ie. Bullying and harassment) see **appendix 2**. It must be remembered that we all have a responsibility to report an allegation of child abuse and/or bullying if we have a reasonable belief it took place.

If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident of child abuse, bullying and/or wellbeing concern has occurred, then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to a reasonable belief include, but are not limited to the following;

- A child or parent/guardian states that they or someone they know has been abused or bullied (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- A child or parent/guardian states that they are concerned for the wellbeing of another student (ie. absenteeism, negative attitude to school, negative relationships with fellow students and/or teachers)
- Behaviour consistent with that of an abuse or bullying victim is observed¹⁷
- Someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse or bullying but is unwilling to report it
- Observing suspicious behaviour
- Observing wellbeing alerts (as mentioned above).

When a student or parent/carer discloses an incident of abuse, bullying or wellbeing concern or staff have a reasonable belief of abuse, bullying or wellbeing concern;

- Separate the student from the other students discreetly,
- Contact the Student Welfare Coordinator to complete the following steps (if the Student Welfare Coordinator is not available gain the assistance of a Year Level Manager, Sub-school Leader and/or Assistant Principal);
 - Listen to the student carefully,
 - Let the student use their own words to explain what has occurred,
 - Reassure the student that you take what they are saying seriously, it is not their fault and they are doing the right thing,
 - Explain to them that the information may need to be shared with others, such as their parents/carers, specific people within student services and/or the police,
 - Do not make promises to the student, such as promising not to tell anyone, except that you will do your best to keep them safe,

¹⁷ For example behaviour please visit [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/ data/assets/word doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards overview.doc](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc)

HHS – Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

- Do not leave the student in a distressed state.
- In cases of child abuse (physical violence, sexual offence, serious emotional or psychological abuse, serious neglect) students are to be provided with an incident report form (see Appendix 1) to complete, or complete it together, if you think the student is able.
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the student's words and if not yet completed, report the disclosure to your Student Welfare Coordinator, member of the Principal Team or child protection
- Ensure that the disclosure is recorded accurately and that the record is stored securely.
- In cases of bullying and wellbeing concerns, the Student Welfare Coordinator will determine the pathway to be followed and record the relevant information securely.

Healesville High School has access to the following professional support services through the Student Welfare Coordinator for students who require extra assistance;

- Psychologist
- Social workers
- Drug and Alcohol Counsellor
- Community Health Nurse
- School Nurse
- Doctor (General Practitioner)

APPENDIX 1

Child Safety Incident Report

Incident details

HHS - Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Date of Incident	
Time of Incident	
Location of Incident	
Name(s) of child/children involved	
Name(s) of staff/volunteer involved	

NOTE: If you believe the child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000

Does the child identify as aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander? (Circle one of the following)

No

Yes, Aboriginal

Yes, Torres Strait Islander

Please categorise the incident

Physical violence	
Sexual offence	
Serious emotional or psychological abuse	
Serious neglect	

Please describe the incident

When did it take place?	
Who was involved?	
What did you see?	
Other information	

Office use

Date incident report received	
Staff member managing incident	
Follow-up date	

HHS - Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Incident ref. number	
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Has the incident been reported?

Child Protection	
Police	
Another third party (please specify)	

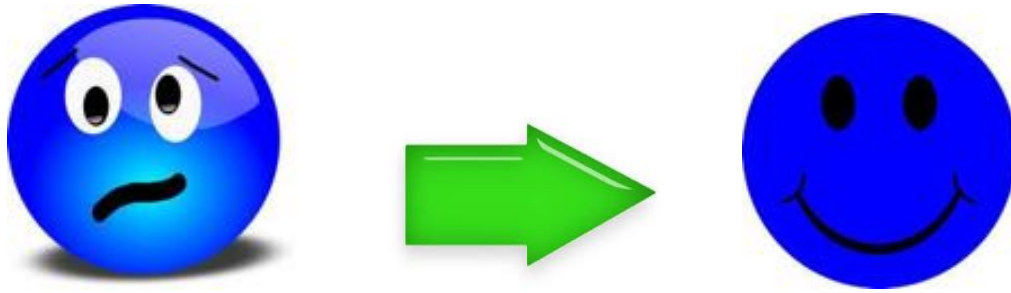
Incident reporter wishes to remain anonymous? (Circle response)

YES

NO

APPENDIX 2

Concerned about safety or wellbeing?



Follow this process to get the help and assistance you may need;

