

Policy Title	Child Safe Policy		
Date approved	15/11/2016	Review Date:	November 2019
Revision No:		Revision Date:	

Rationale:

Reservoir High 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 and volunteers. We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. 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.

If anyone reading this policy believes a child is at immediate risk of abuse, Phone 000. Parents can get support from Parentline - Call 13 22 89. Children can get support from Kidshelpline - Call 1800 55 1800.

Reservoir High School is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks as much as possible. 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 support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.

We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability. We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

Our children

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

We promote diversity and tolerance at Reservoir High School, 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
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of LGBTGI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Gender Diverse and Intersex) children
- 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.

Our staff and volunteers:

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with 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 or review of the code of conduct.

Training and supervision:

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

Reservoir High 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 Professional Development to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and 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. We remain committed to the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of LGBTGI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Gender Diverse and Intersex) children.

New employees and volunteers will be inducted to ensure they understand our schools commitment to child safety 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 (please refer to Reservoir High Schools Code of Conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment:

Reservoir High School uses the recruitment processes of the Department of Education and Training.

Our school understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check or VIT Registration and to provide evidence of this Check/Registration. Please see the [Working with Children Check](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au or <http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/> for further information.

Reservoir High School carries out rigorous reference checks on applicants and DET and VIT carry out police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the appropriate people.

Fair procedures for personnel:

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also 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 form¹, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

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

Privacy:

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be 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:

Reservoir High School takes our 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.²

¹ See resource seven in this toolkit.

² A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed.

- **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.³
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.⁴

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 and online environments

Regular review:

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute through School Council. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Allegations, concerns and complaints:

Our school takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed⁵
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

Evaluation:

To be reviewed and updated as required by new laws and developments in relevant legislation or Department of Education and Training requirements. To also be reviewed as part of the school's three year review process.

Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website

<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-disclose-offence>

³ Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website

<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-protect-a-new-criminal-offence-to>

Further information about the offence of grooming is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website

<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/grooming-offence>

⁴ Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood 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 information about how to make a report to child protection.

<https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/making-report-child-protection>

⁵ For example behaviour, please see An overview of the Victorian child safe standards.

<https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/overview-victorian-child-safe-standards-word>

Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

© State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services, December 2015.

Where the term 'Aboriginal' is used it refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Indigenous is retained when it is part of the title of a report, program or quotation. Throughout this paper we refer to 'Aboriginal peoples' rather than 'Aboriginal people' to reflect the plurality and diversity of Victorian Aboriginal communities.

Available at: <http://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards>