

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

1. POLICY OBJECTIVE

Fintona Girls' School (the School) is committed to the safety of every child enrolled as a student at our school. Children have the right to a safe environment at school. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. This policy provides an overview of the key elements of our approach to child safety at Fintona. This policy provides the framework for:

- the implementation of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child protection within the School;
- the creation of a positive and robust child protection culture;
- the promotion and open discussion of child protection issues within the School; and
- complying with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection in Victoria.

Our school policies and procedures have been developed to create a culturally safe and inclusive environment and meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the following individuals in the Fintona Girls' School community:

- all staff;
- all students;
- all parents/guardians;
- all visitors;
- all volunteers and contractors (whether or not they work in direct contact with students); and
- Board members.

This policy provides procedures and applies to all school activities during and outside of school hours. This includes school activities that are occurring on school campus, offsite, online, cocurricular, sport activities and programs, excursions, camps, interstate and overseas travel. In the application and implementation of this policy full consideration is required regarding the needs of our students including culture, diversity and age.

The Fintona school environment is any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by Fintona for use by a child during or outside school hours and includes:

- Fintona Senior Campus;
- Fintona Junior Campus;
- online school environments including email, inFintona and networked systems; and
- other locations provided by Fintona for a child's use, including locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events.

This policy informs our school community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

3. DEFINITIONS

Child	An individual who is under the age of 18 years and who is enrolled as a student at Fintona Girls' School (the School).
Child abuse	Child abuse includes- (a) any act committed against a child involving- (i) a sexual offence; or (ii) the offence of grooming; and (b) the infliction, on a child, of- (i) physical violence; or (ii) serious emotional or psychological harm; and (c) serious neglect of a child.
Child connected work	This is work that is authorised by the School and performed by an adult in the School environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.
Child safety	Child safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.
Child Safety Officers	The School Child Safety Team comprises: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• School Psychologist• Deputy Principal / Head of Senior School• Head of Middle School• Head of Junior Campus
Failure to protect a child from a sexual offence	The offence provides that a person who: a. by reason of the position, he or she occupies within a relevant organisation, has the power or responsibility to reduce or remove a substantial risk that a relevant child will become the victim of a sexual offence committed by a person of or over the age of 18 years who is associated with the relevant organisation; and b. knows that there is a substantial risk that the person will commit a sexual offence against a relevant child – must not negligently fail to reduce or remove that risk.
Failure to disclose an offence	A person of or over the age of 18 years (whether in Victoria or elsewhere) who has information that leads the person to form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child under the age of 16 years by another person of or over the age of 18 years must disclose that information to a police officer as soon as it is practicable to do so, unless the person has a reasonable excuse for not doing so.
Grooming	The offence of grooming for sexual conduct with a child under the age of 16 is found in section 49M of the <i>Crimes Act 1958</i> . That section provides: (1) A person (A) commits an offence if: (a) A is 18 years of age or more; and

- (b) A communicates, by words or conduct (whether or not a response is made to the communication), with:
- (i) another person (B) who is a child under the age of 16 years; or
 - (ii) another person (C) under whose care, supervision or authority B is; and
- (c) A intends that the communication facilitate B engaging or being involved in the commission of a sexual offence by A or by another person who is 18 years of age or more.
- (2) A person who commits an offence against subsection (1) is liable to level 5 imprisonment (10 years maximum).
- (3) A does not intend to facilitate B engaging or being involved in the commission of a sexual offence by A or by another person who is 18 years of age or more if, were the conduct constituting the sexual offence to occur, A or the other person would satisfy an exception, or have a defence, to that sexual offence.
- (4) It is immaterial that some or all of the conduct constituting an offence against subsection (1) occurred outside Victoria, so long as B or C was, or B and C were, in Victoria at the time at which that conduct occurred.
- (5) It is immaterial that B or C was, or B and C were, outside Victoria at the time at which some or all of the conduct constituting an offence against subsection (1) occurred, so long as A was in Victoria at the time that conduct occurred.
- (6) It is immaterial that A, B and C were all outside Victoria at the time at which some or all of the conduct constituting an offence against subsection (1) occurred, so long as A intended that the sexual offence would occur in Victoria.
- (7) In this section:
- communication** includes an electronic communication within the meaning of the *Electronic Transactions (Victoria) Act 2000*;
- sexual offence** means:
- (a) an offence against a provision of Subdivision (8A), this Subdivision (other than section 49K(1) or this section), (8C), (8D), (8E), (8F) or (8FA); or
 - (b) an attempt to commit an offence covered by paragraph (a); or
 - (c) an assault with intent to commit an offence referred to in paragraph (a).

Further information can be obtained at: www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-andfamilies/grooming-offence

School environment The School environment is any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by Fintona for use by a child during or outside school hours, and includes:

- our Senior Campus on Balwyn Road, Balwyn
- our Junior Campus (including ELC) on Balwyn Road, Balwyn
- online school environments including email, inFintona and networked systems
- other locations provided by the School for a child's use, including locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events.

Student A person who is enrolled at or attends the school premises.

Volunteer	A person who performs work without remuneration or reward for the school or school boarding premises in the school environment
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4. POLICY SECTION

4.1 STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Fintona is committed to the safety, participation, empowerment and protection of all children/ students in our care. We are committed to providing a child-safe and child-friendly environment, where children and young people are safe and feel safe and are able to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.

We have zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to the protection of children from all forms of child abuse. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures. Our policies and procedures will provide the name and contact details of staff who have specific responsibilities in relation to child safety and who may receive reports of suspicion of child abuse. Child abuse includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect and a child's exposure to family violence.

We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

We are committed to proactively preventing child abuse, identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

We have robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.

We are 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 emotional, physical and cultural safety of all children and to providing a safe environment for their learning.

We support and respect all students and welcome and promote diversity and tolerance in the School. We do this by acknowledging and celebrating people from all cultural backgrounds and support their ability to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights. In particular, the School promotes the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families;
- international students;
- children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families o Children who express a full range of sexual orientation and gender identity and their families; and
- neurodiverse children, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable and their families.

Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our school has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

We are committed to take action to ensure a child safe culture is championed and modelled across the School.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

4.2 APPLICATION

The policy is to be applied in conjunction with provisions in the *Child Safety Code of Conduct* and all other relevant child safety and protection policies and procedures.

4.3 CHILD SAFE PRINCIPLES

The School's commitment to child safety is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse:

- all children have the right to be safe;
- the welfare and best interests of the child are paramount;
- the views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected;
- clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in the *Child Safety Code of Conduct*;
- the safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture;
- child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our School community;
- procedures are in place to screen all staff, external education providers, contractors and volunteers who have direct contact with children;
- child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility;
- child safety/protection training is mandatory for all School Board members, staff and nominated volunteers;
- procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the School community, via the *Child Safety Response and Mandatory Reporting Procedure* for staff via inFintona and for the community via the Fintona Girls' School website;
- children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander; and
- children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

4.4 CHILD SAFETY PROGRAMMING

Fintona is committed to the effective implementation of child safety programming and ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated. We adopt a risk management approach by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety risks based on a range of factors including the nature of our activities, physical and online environments and the characteristics of the student body.

Our child safety programming relates to all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse. It includes:

- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and associated key risk indicators;
- clear procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse;
- strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, students, parents and carers, external education providers, contractors and volunteers to understand, identify, discuss and report child protection matters;
- procedures for recruiting and screening School Board members, staff (including casual, emergency relief, part-time and full-time) and long-term contractors and volunteers;
- wellbeing strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe;
- policies with respect to cultural diversity and students with disabilities;
- a child protection/safety training program;
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children;
- guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality;
- policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards including the National Child Safe Standards, Ministerial Order 706 and Ministerial Order 1359; and
- a system for oversight, monitoring, continuous improvement and review.

4.5 RESPONSIBILITY

Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility. The School Leadership Team (comprising the Principal and School Board) is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359. These strategies will give the highest priority to the promotion and protection of a child's safety, health, development, education and wellbeing.

The Principal will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed;
- model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing;
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered;
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students;
- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the School community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and School Board meetings;
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of responding to abuse;
- create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities;
- oversee the programs for child safety including the culture, compliance, incident and reporting programs, and is the first point of contact for raising child safety concerns within Fintona; and
- champion child safety within the School and assist in co-ordinating responses to child protection incidents, including overseeing compliance with all mandatory reporting.

4.6 OUR STUDENTS

Our strategies will empower students who are vital and active participants in our organisation and provide them with opportunities to give us feedback and ensure that they feel safe and comfortable in reporting concerns or allegations of abuse.

Our students are also informed of their rights to participate in a safe and supportive educational environment, and have formal and informal avenues for feedback, confidential disclosure, and reporting.

The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, to help children and young people feel safe and be less isolated.

The School has arranged age-appropriate training and education programs to inform students about sexual abuse prevention and related information.

The School provides students with opportunities to participate and is responsive to their contributions in a way that strengthens confidence and engagement.

The School is committed to ensuring students' families participate in decisions affecting their child, where appropriate. This may include participation in reporting and responding to allegations of abuse.

The School is committed to raising awareness and providing access to the Child Safe Standards and the School's associated child safe policies and procedures with our students, families and the community.

To support child safety and wellbeing at Fintona, we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support at Fintona to ensure a sense of belonging through our Inclusion and Safety Committee programming, Student Wellbeing Programming and our Fintona expectations and values.

We inform students of their rights through wellbeing programming and ongoing awareness and provide them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers. We ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time, including the School Psychologist. Students and families can also access information on how to report concerns and enter grievances via inFintona, the student diary, parent handbook and our external website.

When Fintona is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct or abuse of a child, we will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously, check our understanding of the complaint, support the student and keep them (and their parents and carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

Our families and the School community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns. Grievances policies and processes are available to parents and students via inFintona.

To support family engagement, at Fintona we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our School's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement. We do this by various methods, including communicating regarding our child safe policies and seeking feedback from families and the community via Newsletter articles, online parenting support subscriptions, online feedback forms, the School Board and Parents'

Association meetings. Newsletters/Messenger articles will inform families and the School community about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.

Students will also have opportunities via clearly communicated grievance and concern procedures, student wellbeing forums, student wellbeing surveys, student leadership roles and the Student Safety and Inclusion Committees.

All of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents in Fintona and the Fintona Girls' School Website.

4.7 OUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave when working and interacting with children in our organisation.

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the School or the Department of Education and Training, and always follow the School's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures;
- act in accordance with our *Child Safety Code of Conduct* as well as their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse;
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our *Child Safety Response and Mandatory Reporting Procedure*, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#).
- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives;
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students;
- be trained and supported to effectively implement our *Child Safety Policy*;
- receive training and information to recognise key indicators of child harm including harm caused by other students;
- receive training and information to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and support colleagues who disclose them;
- receive training and information on how to build culturally safe environments for students.
- facilitate child-friendly ways for children and young people to express their views, participate in decision making and raise their concerns; and
- identify and mitigate risks in the online and physical environments without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.

It is everyone's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have. All staff and volunteers must raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with the Principal or Deputy Principal. Where the concern relates to the Principal, they should report to the Chair of the School Board.

We do not distinguish between direct and indirect volunteers as all volunteers on School premises may have contact with students, giving rise to a duty of care to protect our students. Volunteers should not be left alone with students, but our policy and procedures will be designed assuming this may inadvertently occur. Fintona will ensure that volunteers are aware of the *Child Safety Policy* and *Child Safety Code of Conduct*.

4.8 THE SCHOOL BOARD

In performing the functions and powers given to the School Board under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, Board members will:

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community;
- ensure that child safety is a standing agenda item at School Board meetings;
- undertake annual training on child safety;
- approve updates to, and act in accordance with the *Child Safety Code of Conduct* to the extent that it applies to School Board members; and
- when hiring School Board members, ensure that selection practices include rigorous child safe questions.

4.9 SPECIFIC STAFF CHILD SAFETY RESPONSIBILITIES

Fintona has Child Safety Officers, supported by the Leadership and Wellbeing Teams, to implement our child safety policies and practices, and who are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and who co-ordinate responses to child safety incidents.

- The Deputy Principal is responsible for monitoring Fintona's compliance with the *Child Safety Policy*. Anyone in our school community should approach the Deputy Principal if they have any concerns about Fintona's compliance with the Child Safety Policy.
- The Marketing and Communications Manager is responsible for informing the School community about this policy, and making it publicly available.
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in other child safety policies and procedures, including the *Child Safety Code of Conduct*, *Child Safety Response and Mandatory Reporting Procedure* and the *Child Safety Strategy*.

Child safety matters are discussed and managed as required at each Executive and Leadership Team meetings, quarterly OH&S Committee meetings and quarterly Student Safety Inclusion Committee meetings. The Student Safety and Inclusion Committee provides an opportunity for students to provide input into child safety at Fintona. All teams that meet regularly have standing agenda items related to child safety matters including concerns.

The Fintona Child Safety Risk Register is updated annually by the Child Safety Officers and reported annually to the OH&S Committee, Leadership Team, Wellbeing Team and School Board.

4.10 CONTRACTORS

All contractors engaged by the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment. Contractors include outsourced maintenance and building services, consultants, catering providers and school cleaners. This also includes individuals or organisations engaged to run after hours programs at the School for our students. All contractors engaged by Fintona are required to be familiar with the *Child Safety Policy*, *Child Safety Code of Conduct* and *Child Safety Response and Mandatory Reporting Procedure*. Fintona will also include this requirement in its written agreement with third-party contractors.

4.11 EXTERNAL EDUCATION PROVIDERS

An external education provider is any organisation that Fintona has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at Fintona. The delivery of such a course may take place on Fintona premises or elsewhere. All external education providers engaged by Fintona are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment. All external education providers engaged by Fintona are required to be familiar with our *Child Safety Policy* and the *Child Safety Code of Conduct*. Fintona will include this requirement in its written agreement with external education providers.

4.12 TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Training and education are important to ensure that everyone at Fintona understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility. Our organisational 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. New employees, volunteers and contractors are briefed on commencement and provided with information to ensure they understand Fintona's 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 the *Child Safety Code of Conduct* to further understand appropriate behaviour).

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters. Our staff will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment. Staff training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- our School's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices;
- completing the [Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#) online module annually;
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm;
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students;
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations; and
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment.

The training and awareness requirements for the School's volunteers will depend on the type and scope of volunteering. Training and awareness will be tailored where possible according to specific roles and responsibilities. All volunteers will be required to read and acknowledge the *Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct* and *Response and Mandatory Reporting Procedure* and nominated volunteers are required to complete the *Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations* online module annually.

All School Board members are considered to be in governance roles with an ability to influence the School's decision-making and therefore are required to be treated as responsible persons and undertake regular child safe training, including the online module from the Department of Education and Training - *Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse*. To ensure our School Board are equipped with the knowledge required to make decisions in the best interests of student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment, they will be trained at least annually. Training includes guidance on:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe; Standards and managing the risk of child abuse;
- child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment; and
- Fintona child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices.

4.13 RECRUITMENT

At Fintona we apply child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

All public advertisements and selection criteria for job applications with Fintona will emphasise our commitment to child safety.

All people aged 18 and over engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children Check or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching registration
- collect and record:
 - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
 - the person's history of working with children
 - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

We carry out thorough reference checks and pre-employment screening to ensure that we are recruiting with child safety in mind.

All newly appointed staff will be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program will include a focus on:

- the *Child Safety Policy* (this document);
- the *Child Safety Code of Conduct*;
- the *Child Safety Response and Mandatory Reporting Procedure*; and
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. Staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. This will be undertaken by an individual's direct report on an ongoing basis, after promotion to a new role and at the 3 and 6 month mark after commencement at Fintona. Fintona promotes a culture of open discussion regarding child safety and suitable behaviours and the Leadership Team are regularly prompted to raise any staffing concerns they may have.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our school and department policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

All volunteers are required to comply with our policies and procedures which describe how we assess the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing induction and training, and supervision and management.

4.14 SUPPORTING OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Key principles that we must apply in the design of policy, procedure, interventions, support and reporting in our child protection program are to ensure we:

- promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people;
- promote the cultural safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; and
- promote the safety of children with any form of disability.

We are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and the community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

We celebrate culture, develop knowledge of, and support cultural safety in our school community. This includes:

- Acknowledgement of Country at key school events;
- assembly presentations;
- guest speakers;
- student voice; and
- annual events

The School is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the community through:

- making available on our website, documents including the *Child Safety Policy* (this document), *Child Safety Code of Conduct*, and the *Child Safety Response and Mandatory Reporting Procedure*;
- information in our school newsletter; and
- ensuring that child safety is a standing agenda item at staff and Board meetings.

4.15 SUPPORT FOR AFFECTED STUDENTS

Ensuring a student feels safe and supported following an incident is of critical importance to the School. The School will also ensure that appropriate assistance and support is provided to any child who discloses child abuse or is linked in any way to suspected child abuse. Fintona will work closely with the students, parents and carers, and our wellbeing team to provide support and access to support services. Each matter will be handled on a case-by-case basis. An individual may be supported with:

- referral to the School Psychologist;
- referral to external specialist agencies;
- School Wellbeing Plan; and/or
- learning support.

4.16 FAIR PROCEDURES

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, including investigation updates.

4.17 PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

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. All records are securely stored by the School Psychologist, with a secure copy held in the Principal's Office. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected in accordance with our *Privacy Policy* and applicable legislation. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who

will have access to it. A copy of the *Privacy Policy* is available on the School website and via inFintona.

At induction, new staff and nominated volunteers will be provided with information to ensure they understand the School's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse.

Where there is suspected abuse or misconduct, employees, volunteers and contractors must not disclose or make use of the information in a manner that breaches confidentiality, other than to report and act consistent with the Child Safety Policy and relevant statutory requirements.

4.18 LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

At Fintona we take 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 have an obligation to report that information to the Police. If you fail to report the information, you may be charged with a criminal offence. The maximum penalty is three years imprisonment.
- **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. If you fail to protect a child you may be charged with a criminal offence. The maximum penalty is five years imprisonment.

Please refer to the *Child Safety Response and Mandatory Reporting Procedure* for further information on these responsibilities.

4.19 CHILD PROTECTION ALLEGATIONS, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

The School fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the School community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the Code of Conduct, misconduct or abuse, to occur and remain hidden.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our Grievance Policy.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including School Board members) must follow our *Child Safety Response and Mandatory Reporting Procedure*. Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the School.

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant School staff have been informed, we will ensure Fintona follows:

- the [Four Critical Actions](#) for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child
- the [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending](#)

Our *Anti-Bullying Policy and Behaviour Management Policy* cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

Our suite of child safety policies and procedures, along with training, provide guidance for members of the School Board, staff and volunteers as to how to identify key risk indicators of

child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to one of the School's Child Safety Officers. It also provides detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.

Staff, students, parents and carers, external education providers, contractors, volunteers or other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse are asked to contact one of the School's Child Safety Officers.

The School's Child Safety Officers are the persons holding the following positions:

- School Psychologist
- Deputy Principal / Head of Senior School
- Head of Middle School
- Head of Junior Campus

Fintona takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate in a timely manner. 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. Our staff deal appropriately with allegations and our volunteers are informed on how to report an allegation. 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). All communications will be treated on a need-to-know basis.

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger, please call 000 without delay.

4.20 RISK MANAGEMENT

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we will 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 at the School on social media).

5. POLICY COMPLIANCE

5.1 POLICY BREACH

A breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action. All breaches, near misses and risks related to this policy should be reported to the Policy Owner or a Child Safety Officer at the School.

5.2 POLICY COMPLIANCE MONITORING

Compliance with this policy will be monitored by the Policy Owner, working with other key stakeholders, including the School's Child Safety Officers, HR Manager, Business Manager and others from time to time.

6. RELATED LEGISLATION

- *Ministerial Order 1359*
- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)*