

Scotch College

Child Protection Commitment Statement



SCOTCH COLLEGE – CHILD PROTECTION COMMITMENT STATEMENT

As we grow as a School, we grow in our awareness of the ways in which we can best support our boys.

Scotch College exists for educational purposes in connection with the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, and Christian teachings are fundamental to all that we do. We value the independent spirit of each boy, and seek to equip all boys with an enduring empathy for the needs and views of others.

The School aims to develop the innate and acquired potential of each boy, and so prepare him for a place in the world and for a purpose greater than himself. We seek to do this in an exciting, intimate environment which nurtures self-expression and self-worth, while promoting the uniqueness of each boy's journey.

We want Scotch boys to feel a sense of belonging, of trust and of confidence in their immediate world, in themselves, and in their relationships.

We understand that when boys feel cared for by adults who set clear boundaries, and who are sensitive, open and uncomplicated in their expectations, they feel safe. And it is within such an environment of safety that they are empowered to be their best.

All Scotch personnel are required to understand the important responsibility they have, to:

- protect children and young people from all forms of abuse, bullying and exploitation by people within the school's operations and services;
- be alert to and report incidents of child abuse and neglect occurring both within and beyond the scope of our operations and services, that may have an impact on the children and young people for whom we provide a service; and,
- create and maintain a child-safe culture that is understood, endorsed and put into action by all the individuals who work for, volunteer or access our programs and services.

This Commitment Statement and our Child Protection and Obligations of Reporting Policy have been adopted by the School and ratified by the School Council. They articulate our commitment to the safeguarding of children, protecting them from abuse and neglect.

Safeguarding Scotch involves every member of our community: all members of staff, all visitors and volunteers, and all students and their families.

Our School community will not exploit, harm or abuse our boys.

WE ACT IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD

For the purposes of this Commitment Statement, acting in the best interests of the child includes:

- reporting to Child Protection or the Police all allegations or disclosures of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect;
- reporting to Child Protection when a belief is formed that a child has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed;
- making the child's ongoing safety and wellbeing the primary focus of decision-making;
- sharing appropriate information, expertise and resources with other service providers supporting the child;
- protecting and respecting the cultural and spiritual wellbeing of a child, and his or her connection to family or community of origin; and,
- enabling the child and the child's family to access appropriate services in order to reduce the long-term effects of abuse or neglect.
- keeping the School Council informed through the Risk Committee of safeguarding incidents rated high and critical (nature, frequency and response).

WE ACT ON ALL CONCERNS RELATING TO CHILD PROTECTION IN OUR COMMUNITY

Any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection may report their belief and the grounds to Child Protection or the Police. Requirements of Scotch College staff in relation to these matters are detailed in the School's Child Protection and Obligations of Reporting Policy.

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The grounds on which a child is in need of protection include:

- where the child has been abandoned by his or her parents or carers, and after reasonable enquiries the parents or carers cannot be found, and no other suitable person can be found who is willing and able to care for the child;
- where the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse, and the child's parents or carers have not protected or are unlikely to protect the child;
- where the child has suffered or is likely to suffer emotional or psychological harm of such a kind that his or her emotional or intellectual development is, or is likely to be, damaged, and the child's parents or carers have not protected or are unlikely to protect the child;
- where the child's physical development or health has been or is likely to be significantly harmed, and the child's parents or carers have not arranged for, or are unlikely to arrange for, basic care or effective medical, surgical or other remedial care for the child; and,
- where a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm of a physical, sexual, emotional, developmental or psychological nature as a consequence of activity perpetrated by a member of the school community.

ACTIONS

The school commits to take the following actions to ensure the integrity of the Child Protection Commitment Statement by:

- informing the School community annually of the statement, and making the statement publicly accessible;
- monitoring the School's adherence to the statement through the offices of the Vice Principal and Child Protection Officer, reporting to the School Executive;
- providing appropriate and regular guidance and training for all staff, designed to reinforce obligations and responsibilities in relation to child abuse, areas of potential risk and the standards of practice expected; and,
- ensuring that appropriate support is readily available for any child disclosing abuse or suspected of being a victim of abuse.

DEFINITIONS

Child or young person: A person under the age of 18.

NB. While the accepted definition of a child is a person under the age of 18, this Commitment Statement and the School's Safeguarding policies and procedures also apply to boys who attain the age of 18 while enrolled at the School.

Child Protection Commitment Statement: A Child Protection Commitment Statement defines the principles and procedures implemented to ensure that children and young people who access a programme, service or facility are protected from abuse, bullying and exploitation by members of teaching staff, coaches, volunteers, other staff members and all visitors to the school.

The Scotch College Child Protection Commitment Statement was adopted by the Scotch College School Council on 15 June 2016. The statement was reviewed in 2020 and re-endorsed by the School Council on 19th August 2020.

Code of Conduct: We have developed practice and behaviour guidelines to prevent behaviour that may be harmful to the children and young people in our community. The guidelines cover what is, and what is not, acceptable behaviour or practice when working with or engaging with children and young people.

DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

Emotional or psychological abuse: Emotional or psychological abuse occurs when a child does not receive the love, affection or attention he or she needs for healthy emotional, psychological and social development. Such abuse may involve repeated rejection or threats to a child.

Constant criticism, teasing, ignoring, threatening, yelling, scapegoating, ridicule and rejection or continual coldness are all examples of emotional abuse. Continuing behaviours of these kinds can result in significant damage to the child's physical, intellectual or emotional wellbeing or development.

Physical abuse: Physical abuse occurs when a person subjects a child to non-accidental physically aggressive acts. The abuser may inflict an injury intentionally or inadvertently as a result of a physical punishment or the aggressive treatment of a child.

Physically abusive behaviour includes (but is not limited to) shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning, excessive and physically harmful over-training, and kicking. It also includes giving children harmful substances such as drugs,

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alcohol or poison. Certain types of punishment, while not causing injury, can also be considered physical abuse if they place a child at risk of being hurt.

Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse occurs when an adult or a person in authority (e.g., someone bigger or older) involves a child in any sexual activity. Perpetrators of sexual abuse take advantage of their power, authority or position over the child or young person for their own benefit.

It can include making sexual comments to a child, engaging children to participate in sexual conversations over the internet or on social media, kissing, touching a child's genitals or breasts, oral sex, or intercourse with a child.

Encouraging a child to view pornographic magazines, websites and videos is also sexual abuse.

Neglect: Neglect is the persistent failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, or the deliberate denial of these necessities. Such neglect includes failing to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, clean water, medical attention or supervision, to the extent that the child's health and development are, or are likely to be, significantly harmed.

Categories of neglect include physical neglect, medical neglect, abandonment, emotional neglect and educational neglect. The issue of neglect must be considered within the context of reasonably available resources.

Family violence: Family violence is defined as violence between members of a family or extended family, or those fulfilling the role of family in a child's or a young person's life. It is harmful to children, and can include witnessing violence or the consequences of the violence.

Exposure to family violence places children and young people at risk of physical injury and harm, and has a significant impact on their wellbeing and development.

Sexual exploitation: Sexual exploitation occurs when children are forced into sexual activities that are then recorded in some way and/or used to produce pornography. This pornography can be in the form of actual photos or videos, or published on the internet. Exploitation can also involve children who are forced into prostitution.

Harm: Harm to a child is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by:

- physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect;
- sexual abuse or exploitation;
- a single act, omission or circumstance; and,
- a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.

Grooming: Grooming is a term used to describe what happens when a perpetrator of abuse builds a relationship with a child with a view to abusing the child at some stage.

There is no set pattern in relation to the grooming of children. For some perpetrators, there will be a lengthy period before the abuse begins. The child may be given special attention, and what starts as an apparently normal display of affection, such as cuddling, can develop into sexual touching or masturbation, and then into more serious sexual behaviour. Other perpetrators may draw a child in and abuse the child relatively quickly.

Some abusers do not groom children, but abuse them without forming a relationship at all. Grooming can take place in any setting where a relationship is formed, such as during leisure, music, sports and religious activities, or in internet chatrooms, through social media or by SMS.

Bullying: Bullying involves the inappropriate use of power by one or more persons over another less powerful person or group, and is generally a repeated act. Researchers describe bullying as taking the following forms:

- *verbal* (name-calling, put-downs, threats);
- *physical* (hitting, punching, kicking, scratching, tripping, spitting);
- *social* (ignoring, excluding, ostracising, alienating); and,
- *psychological* (spreading rumours, stalking, dirty looks, hiding or damaging possessions).

MR I TOM BATTY, PRINCIPAL
(AUGUST 2020)