Advance College

Student Care, Safety and Welfare: Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedure

1. Context
Advance College of Education (ACE) is an independent, specialist school which caters for young people primarily aged 15- 19 years who have become disengaged from mainstream education. Our students may have significant gaps in academic achievement and might find it difficult to learn in a group setting, which can lead to behavioural and social struggles at school. The College has three campuses at Hastings, Mornington and Rosebud which offer the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) at Foundation, Intermediate and Senior Levels.
The VCAL qualification is based on adult learning and youth development principles that focus on developing the literacy, numeracy, work related and personal development skills required to successfully map and navigate a pathway to further education and/or employment.
The program aims to:
- Use curriculum that builds on students' interests, abilities and strengths;
- Provide practical 'hands-on' activities to facilitate learning;
- Provide opportunities to integrate learning outcomes across one activity;
- Recognise all student achievements and value their contribution;
- Allow students to learn at their own pace and in different ways according to their preferred learning style;
- Build resilience and confidence;
- Encourage and support active participation in the community; and
- Extend learning experiences beyond the classroom.

ACE supports the principles and practices of equal opportunity and human rights and undertakes to ensure that programs are accessible to all eligible members of the community and are responsive to individual needs.
ACE is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal students, the cultural safety of students from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background, and to providing a safe environment for vulnerable students and students with a disability.

2. Rationale
Statement of Commitment to Child Safety
Advance College of Education (ACE) is committed to the safety and empowerment of all children and young people. As a Child Safe school, we value every child and young person and every decision we make is governed by our belief in their fundamental right to be protected from all forms of harm.
We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our Child Safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and young people.
We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments.
We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our school environment. When Child Safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the Child Safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability.

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.

There is zero tolerance for any form of child abuse or maltreatment within ACE. Any suspected abuse or maltreatment is treated seriously and responded to promptly with reports being made both internally and to external authorities including police and Child Protection. If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

3. Purpose

The ACE Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our College's commitment to creating and maintaining a Child Safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of our College's approach to implementing *Ministerial Order 1359* which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

It 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.

4. Policy

The Child Safe policy sets out the principles and framework governing the College's behaviours and activities that enact the Victorian Child Safe Standards and which aim to keep all young people safe from harm. The policy must be read and understood by all those connected to the College.

In its planning, decision-making and operations ACE will:

- Uphold the rights of children and young people who are connected with our school so that they feel heard on matters relevant to their safety and so that they feel safe and protected.
- Enforce zero tolerance of child abuse and taking all allegations of child abuse, reportable conduct and safety concerns very seriously, ensuring such conduct is dealt with in accordance with our schools' policies, procedures and the law.
- Commit to preventing child abuse and the early identification, reduction or removal of all risks to children and young people.
- Rigorously uphold our legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when there are concerns about a child or young person's safety.

- Have robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- Create a Child Safe school by providing ongoing training and education to staff and volunteers on the Child Safe Standards, Mandatory Reporting, Reportable Conduct, Duty of Care and Information Sharing Schemes.
- Actively work to listen to and empower children and young people attending our school to understand their right to participate in decisions affecting them and to be taken seriously.
- Provide a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander children and young people by considering their needs in providing that environment.
- Provide a culturally safe environment for children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, by considering their needs in providing that environment.
- Provide a safe environment for children and young people with disability, by considering their needs in providing that environment.
- Provide a safe environment for children and young people who have suffered trauma, by considering their needs in providing that environment
- Provide a safe environment for, and considering the needs of, same sex attracted and intersex children, students and young people, and recognising gender diversity in providing a safe environment.
- Provide a safe environment for children and young people who are unable to live at home (for example, children and young people in out of home care, kinship care or custodial settings).
- Ensure safe physical and online environments and minimise the opportunity for children to be harmed.
- Ensure the involvement of families and communities in our efforts to keep children and young people safe and in the development and delivery of our school.
- Have robust governance systems and processes to keep children and young people safe.
- Ensure a commitment to Child Safety is embedded in all levels of the College.

5. Implementation
The College policy on Child Safety is made available to all students, staff, Board members, parents and carers in the following mediums:
- An overview at the Enrolment Interview
- A summary in Staff/Student Handbooks
- The College Website

The Policy is 'kept alive' through:
- Presentations and discussion at Staff and Committee meetings.
- Forums for parents, staff and students to be informed about current understandings of Child Safety.

5.1 Roles and Responsibilities
College Leadership Team
The College Leadership Team (comprising the Principal and Assistant Principals) 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*.
The Leadership Team will:

- Ensure effective Child Safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed.
- Adhere to all aspects of the ACE Child Safety Policy and ACE Child Safe Code of Conduct (available on K-drive and ACE website) and provide to all new ACE staff during induction and all returning ACE staff at the beginning of each school year.
- 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.
- Oversee that all members of our College community understand and adhere to their responsibilities regarding Child Safety.
- 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.
- Ensure any instances of child abuse are reported immediately, in line with the *ACE Child Safe and Mandatory Reporting Procedure* (available on K-drive), including following The PROTECT Four Critical Actions for Schools.
- Oversee that risk assessments for Child Safety are carried out regularly.
- Ensure recruitment procedures have regard to Child Safety, as outlined in this policy.
- Ensure the *Child Safe Officer* is adequately trained and resourced to carry out their duties.
- Promote regular open discussion on Child Safety issues within the school community including at Leadership Team Meetings, Staff Meetings and Committee 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.
- Record Child Safety complaints and concerns, and analyse trends as needed.
- Coordinate reviews following significant safety incidents and recommend improvements.
- Maintain the College's Child Safety risk register.
- Ensure compliance with the *ACE Child Safety Policy* and coordinate practice reviews in consultation with the College community.
- Ensure staff maintain detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals.
- Ensure mandatory reporters complete the annual mandatory reporting training.

College Staff and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers will:
- Participate in Child Safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the College, and always follow the College's Child Safety and wellbeing policies and procedures.
- Act in accordance with our *Child Safety Code of Conduct.*
- Report any Child Safety issues to the *Child Safe Officer* or a member of the Leadership Team. Ensure any instances of child abuse are reported immediately, in line with the ACE *Child Safe and Mandatory Reporting Policies and Procedures*, including following the PROTECT Four Critical Actions for Schools.
- Be the first point of contact and support for their students and their families in relation to child abuse and Child Safe issues.
- Assist students in reporting child abuse if required.

- Identify and raise concerns about Child Safety issues 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.

The College Committee:

In performing the functions and powers given to them under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, College Committee members will:

- Adhere to all aspects of the *ACE Child Safety Policy* and ACE *Child Safe Code of Conduct* (available on K-drive and ACE website) and provided at the first meeting of each school year to all ACE Committee members.
- Ensure 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.*
- Champion and promote a Child Safe culture with the broader College community.
- Ensure that Child Safety is a regular agenda item at Committee meetings to ensure that a culture of Child Safety is being embedded and members are informed and understand the issues.
- Undertake annual training on Child Safety (N.B. Child Safe Standards School Council Training slide presentation is available on PROTECT).
- Ensure that ACE's risk assessment strategies for Child Safety are robust enough to manage any potential Child Safety risks and are reviewed regularly.
- Approve updates to, and act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to Committee members.
- Ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are Child Safe. At our College employment duties are delegated to the Principal who is bound by this policy.

Specific Staff Child Safety Responsibilities:

ACE has nominated a *Child Safety Officer* to support the Principal to implement our Child Safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training.

The responsibilities of the *Child Safety Officer* are outlined at [Guidance for Child Safety champions and include:](#)

Promoting Child Safety culture:

- *Promote Child Safety and wellbeing: for example:*
  o Through emails for all staff and through newsletters, social media and the College website.
  o Ensure the school's Child Safety policies and procedures are current and fit for purpose, are publicly accessible and are known and implemented.

- *Provide support and guidance*
- *Maintain current skills and knowledge to support Child Safety and wellbeing, including:*
  o Child-focused complaint processes and reporting obligations including *ACE Child Safe and Mandatory Reporting Procedure* and the Four Critical Actions for Schools.
  o Student rights, participation and empowerment.
  o Aboriginal cultural safety and inclusive practices to meet students' diverse needs.

- o Child Safety risk management including online safety.
- o Child Safety information sharing and record-keeping obligations.
- o Working with relevant agencies to refer students and families to appropriate support.
- o Keeping across emerging research and best practice guidance in Child Safety and wellbeing.
- *Maintain current skills and knowledge to support Child Safety and wellbeing*
- *Training and education*
  - o Provide Child Safety induction programs for new school staff, volunteers and contractors as required
  - o Provide Child Safety training for school staff, volunteers and contractors,
  - o Provide Child Safety updates and information to staff and volunteers

Students
- Know and understand the information in the Student Handbook linked to Child Safety.
- Report any instance of child abuse to an ACE staff member they trust, who will then report it to the appropriate authorities according to the *ACE Child Safe and Mandatory Reporting Procedure policies and procedures*, including following the PROTECT Four Critical Actions for Schools.
- Other aspects relating to students in the ACE Child Safe Policy.

Parent/Carer
- Know and understand the information in the Student Handbook linked to Child Safety.
- Report any instance of child abuse to an ACE staff member they trust, who will then report it to the appropriate authorities according to the *ACE Child Safe and Mandatory Reporting Policies and Procedures*, including following the PROTECT Four Critical Actions for Schools
- All other aspects relating to students in the ACE Child Safe Policy.

5.2 Scope
This policy:
- Applies to all College staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to College Board members where indicated.
- Applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided by for a student's use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers.

5.3 Definitions
The following terms in this policy have specific definitions (follow link to expand):
- Aboriginal refers to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
- child
- child information sharing scheme and family violence information sharing scheme
- Child Safety
- child sexual exploitation
- child abuse
- child-connected work
- child-related work
- duty of care
- families refers to parents, guardians, carers and significant others
- family violence

- school environment
- school boarding environment
- school staff
- school boarding premises staff
- school governing authority
- student
- volunteer

5.4 Child Safety Code of Conduct

Our *Child Safety Code of Conduct* (available on K-drive, ACE website) is provided to all staff at the beginning of each year and/or as part of new staff induction. This sets out the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We ensure students are informed of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour so they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults within our school. *The Child Safety Code of Conduct* also includes processes the College community can follow to report inappropriate behaviour.

5.5 Managing Risks to Child Safety and Wellbeing

At ACE we identify, assess and manage risks to Child Safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our *Child Safety and Wellbeing* policies and procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site overnight camps, adventure activities and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

Our *Child Safety Risk Register* is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our Leadership Team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the *Child Safety Risk Register* at least annually.

Additional ways that we manage our Child Safe risks include:

- Having robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- All staff, volunteer and contractor's Working with Children (WWC) Clearances are monitored.
- The Child Safety Code of Conduct outlines acceptable and unacceptable behaviour within both physical and online environments.
- Child Safety is a key agenda item at College meetings including (but not limited to); Leadership meetings, Committee meetings and General Staff meetings.
- Ensuring the Child Safety Officer has the appropriate skills, training and capacity to fulfil the role.
- Ensuring that all school staff (including contractors and volunteers) are trained in the College's Child Safety strategies and have the appropriate skills and capacity to fulfil their roles.
- Staff are informed to notify any Child Safety incidents to the Principal or Child Safety Officer who will ensure any instances of child abuse are reported immediately, in line with the *ACE Child Safe* and *Mandatory Reporting* Policies and Procedures, including following the PROTECT Four Critical Actions for Schools.
- Child Safety strategies are reviewed after an incident. Reviews are documented and recorded, including any opportunities for improvement.
- Recording all Child Safety incidents, disclosures or suspicion o child abuse in *ACEF99 Record of Incident, Disclosure or Suspicion of Child Abuse*
- Child Safety incidents are documented in reports to the ACE Committee

- Internal assessment of complaints relating to allegations of abuse and reporting, assessment and investigation to relevant external agencies.

- Ensure that the Child Safe strategies are preventative, proactive and promote a shared responsibility to develop an open and aware culture of Child Safety.

- As an Information Sharing Entity, ACE will uphold the requirements of the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS).

- New ideas and external scrutiny are encouraged, enabling the identification of opportunities for improvement.

- Encourage students and families to be actively involved in the planning and decision-making process.

Online

- We have a *Digital Technologies* policy (available on K-drive and provided as part of the Student Handbook) which outlines our commitment to providing students with the opportunity to benefit from digital technologies, expected student behaviour with digital technologies, our commitment to promoting safe, responsible and discerning use of digital technologies and our policies and procedures for responding to inappropriate student behaviour in digital technologies.
- ACE is an eSmart school and has access to student digital resources which informs students about online safety risks. These resources are utilised within our Learning Program.
- Students and families are informed of appropriate use of our school's technology and how to report concerns around cyberbullying.

Physical

- Risk assessments are developed for all off-site overnight campus, adventure activities and excursions.
- All students are supervised properly in all settings, including during break times, excursions and camps.
- We keep records of any court orders in place regarding access or intervention orders and ensure all relevant campus staff and administration staff are well informed.
- Student risk assessments are developed (where required) to mitigate students Child Safety and wellbeing risks.
- We consider staff and student ratios when attending excursions and camps to ensure appropriate support and monitoring takes place.
- We adhere to our Visitors Policy (available on K-drive) to ensure we maintain the safety of our physical environments.

Procurement and third parties

- We require contractors to provide evidence of compliance with the Child Safe Standards prior to entering our school.
- Contractors are asked to provide their Working with Children Clearance upon entry to the College.
- The Principal is responsible for collecting Child Safety compliance information about contractors.
- If a contractor is found to be non-compliant with the Child Safe Standards ACE will:
    - cease all activities until the issue is resolved

- o if appropriate, inform of non-compliance and provide an opportunity to rectify the problem, or
- o if the issue is serious, contact the relevant authorities.
- *The Third Party* Policy and Procedure outlines how the care, safety and welfare of our students is ensured when learning with external, contracted VET providers.

5.6 Establishing a Culturally Safe Environment

At ACE, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our College planning, policies, and activities.

We have developed the following strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community:

- Support students to explore their connections to culture, community, and country by engaging their families and relevant Aboriginal organisations.
- Recognise and celebrate main key events and anniversaries for Aboriginal students, families, and communities.
- An Acknowledgement of Country will take place at all key meetings and events. An Acknowledgment of Country will also be introduced into our classrooms.
- We will provide opportunities for students to share their cultural identity and express their culture at school.
- New staff and volunteer inductions will include cultural awareness and cultural safety training.
- All staff will participate in ongoing training around the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and young people.
- We have zero tolerance to racism and have clear steps on how racism will be managed at ACE, as outlined in our *Child Safe Code of Conduct, Student Welfare Policy and Bullying and Harassment Procedure.*
- All campuses will acknowledge Aboriginal culture by ensuring Aboriginal specific artefacts are present across all ACE campuses.
- We will ensure ACE policies and procedures address accessibility, anti-discrimination, cultural safety, diversity and inclusion.

5.7 Student Empowerment

To support Child Safety and wellbeing at ACE, 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.

We focus on student agency to ensure children and young people feel in control of their body, mind and actions. Within their daily interaction at our College and throughout our Learning Program, we support students to develop skills in managing one's emotions, being able to problem solve, make good decisions and recognise and respond to emotional cues. We are clear on our expectations and encourage our staff to consider biases and be thoughtful about what success might look like through eyes other than our own.

We know the development of positive relationships is key when working with children and young people. All our staff take the time to build trusting relationships with our students. At ACE we acknowledge that trust takes time to establish. It is through the development of trust that our students will develop the confidence that any concern raised about school, home or within their community will be taken seriously and acted on as required.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the College to ensure a sense of belonging through implementing our whole school approach to:
- Respectful Relationships
- Berry Street Education Model (BSEM)
- Student Rules and Responsibilities
- Our College values, philosophy and motto

We inform students of their rights through: class discussion, activities, posters displayed around the College, guest speakers and our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships and the BSEM to give them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up and act on concerns. 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. Students and families can also access information on how to report concerns by contacting the College on 59864623. When the school 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.

We provide opportunities for our students to be engaged on issues that directly affect them and provide meaningful opportunities to contribute to our school. We achieve this through providing the following opportunities:
- Focus group sessions with the Assistant Principal each term
- Empowering students to lead their own educational and wellbeing journey through the creation of Individual Education Plans (IEP) where students to set their own personalised goals and are actively be involved in decision making which affects themselves.

5.8 Family Engagement

We see our families and the College community as having an important role to play in monitoring and promoting Child Safety and wellbeing and helping our children and young people to raise any concerns. We focus on establishing a safe and welcoming environment for families which includes building positive relationships. We create opportunities for families to collaborate and build connection with the College by:
- Classroom teams keep in regular contact with families around their child's engagement, progress and Child Safe and wellbeing concerns (where appropriate).
- Connecting with our families by ensuring they are updated on programs, upcoming events and plans at our school through our school newsletters and website.

Our families and the College community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, at ACE we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our College'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:

- All of our Child Safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents on the College website and hard copies are available from Reception, on request
- Newsletters will inform families and the College community about any significant updates to our Child Safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters and posters displaying the rights of a child will be displayed across the College.
- Information regarding the Child Safety Standards will be included in the Student Handbook and discussed during the enrolment process.

5.9 Diversity and Equity

As a Child Safe school, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our Child Safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal children and young people
- children from diverse religious and cultural communities
- children and young people with disabilities
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- children and young people that have experienced trauma
- children and young people experiencing complex mental health needs
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+
- children and young people from all socio-economic factors (experiencing homelessness or family homelessness, insecure employment or accommodation, individual or family contact with the justice system, poverty, addiction and low educational attainment).

At ACE we provide specialised support to our diverse community to ensure we protect them from child abuse and provide equal access to quality education and wellbeing support. The strategies that we practice include:

- Establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.
- Taking a zero-tolerance stance to racism and discrimination.
- Increasing our knowledge around diversity and establishing a clear plan around inclusion within our College.
- Increasing our understanding of the diverse cultures in our communities by asking young people and families about their culture and cultural support needs.
- Recognising key dates that connect with our school community.
- Creating accessible physical environments.
- Supporting gender diversity.
- Normalising and respecting the name and pronouns that correspond with people's gender identity.

- Recognising that LGBTIQA+ people are not a homogenous group and have individual differences but do experience a range of common issues that prevent them from being respected, treated equally and having the same opportunities as other members of the community.
- Using contemporary and inclusive examples when discussing families and relationships.
- Taking a holistic approach when responding to family violence.
- Responding to family violence in a way that is accessible, culturally responsive, safe, child-centred, inclusive and non-discriminatory.
- Compiling a range of age-appropriate instructional materials for exploring differences and similarities in class including:
  o Resilience Rights and Respectful Relationships resources
  o Curriculum, books, and resources that reflect diverse views and perspectives
- Offering specialised wellbeing programs which include:
o 2 teachers in each classroom.
o Student support that provides daily wellbeing support, case coordination (including referrals to external services and working within care teams.
o Health and wellbeing sessions,
o Strong links with external child / youth focused services including; housing services, Alcohol and Other Drug services, mental health providers, general health.

5.10 Suitable Staff and Volunteers

At ACE, we apply robust Child Safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

Staff Recruitment

When recruiting and engaging employees, contractors and volunteers involved in student-connected work, we make all reasonable efforts to:

- Confirm the applicant's Working with Children Clearance or equivalent background check such as Victorian teaching registration
- Obtain proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications.
- Verify the applicant's history of work involving children
- Obtain references that address the applicant's suitability for the job and working with children.
- Inform all applicants about the College's Child Safety practices including the Code of Conduct
- All job descriptions for roles at ACE include:
  o The job's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding Child Safety.
  o The job occupant's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to Child Safety.
- All applicants for roles at ACE will be informed of ACE's Child Safe practices and will be given a copy of the Child Safe Code of Conduct. The Child Safe Code of Conduct must be read, agreed to and signed by the applicant prior to them commencing work at ACE.

Staff Induction

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 and Wellbeing Policy (this document).

- The Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- The Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures.
- Other Child Safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

Ongoing Child Safe Monitoring, Supervision and Management of Staff

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 done through explicit conversations during the performance review process, collegiate observations and all teachers working with other teachers and/or with Education Support staff in their classroom.

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

Suitability of Volunteers

All volunteers are required to comply with our *Volunteers* Policy, which describes 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.

5.11 Child Safety Knowledge, Skills and Awareness

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. In addition to the Child Safety and wellbeing induction, 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 Child Safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- Our College's Child Safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, 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 obligation.
- How to identify and mitigate Child Safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment.

Other professional learning and training on Child Safety and wellbeing, for example, training for our volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

College Committee Training and Education

To ensure our College Committee is 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, the Board is 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 College environment.
- ACE Child Safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices.

5.12 Complaints and Reporting Processes

Advance College of Education 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 the *Complaints and Grievances* Policy and Procedure.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers must follow our *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures*. 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 College.

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant staff have been informed, we will ensure our College 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 *Student Wellbeing and Engagement* Policy and *Bullying Prevention Policy* cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

5.13 Communications

ACE is committed to communicating our Child Safety strategies to the College community through:

- Ensuring that key Child Safety and wellbeing policies are available on our website including the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document), Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure.
- Displaying PROTECT posters around the College.
- Updates in our College newsletter.
- Ensuring that Child Safety is a regular agenda item at Leadership meetings, staff meetings and College Board meetings.

5.14 Privacy and Information Sharing

ACE collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws. For information on how our College collects, uses and discloses information refer to: *Privacy Policy.*

5.15 Records Management

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of Child Safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the Department of Education and Training's policy: Records Management – School Records

5.16 Review of Child Safety Practices

At ACE, we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our Child Safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

- Review and improve our policy every two years or after any significant Child Safety incident.
- Analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice.
- Act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with College staff and our school community.
- Ensure that the College Leadership team will review the Child Safe Standards Risk Register annually.

5.17 Related Policies and Procedures

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related ACE policies, procedures, and codes. These include our:

- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- Digital Learning Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Visitors Policy
- Volunteers Policy

5.18 Policy Status and Review

The Leadership Team is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at least every two years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the community.

5.19 Relevant Legislation

- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) (the Act)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015 (Vic)
- Children Legislation Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Act 2017 (Vic)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
- Crimes Amendment (Grooming) Act 2014 (Vic)
- Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014 provides for the offences of failure to protect and failure to disclose.
- Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic)
- Wrongs Amendment (Organisational Child Abuse) Act 2017 (Vic)
- Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)
- Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth)
- Australian Education Regulation 2013 (Cth)
- Education Legislation Amendment (Victorian Institute of Teaching, TAFE and Other Matters) Act 2018 (Vic)

5.20 Other Regulatory Instruments and Reports

- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) Minimum Standards 2022.

- Ministerial Order 1359 (Vic) – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises
- Betrayal of Trust Report 2014 (Vic)
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, Australian Human Rights Commission 2018 and adopted by the Council of Australian Governments in February 2019.
- Review of the Victorian Child Safe Standards, December 2019.

6. Procedure

6.1 Responding to and Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

This procedure is designed to provide guidance on what to do if a child discloses an incident of abuse, or if a parent/carer raises a concern or allegation of abuse which may have taken place at ACE.

6.1.1 If a student discloses an incident of abuse to you:

- Try and separate them from the other students discreetly and listen to them carefully.
- Let the child/young person use their own words to explain what has occurred.
- Reassure the child/young person that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared with others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people at the College, or the police.
- Do not make promises to the child/young person such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- Do not leave the child/young person in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together, if you think the child is able to do this.
- As soon as it is practicable to do so (unless there is a reasonable excuse for not doing so) record the information using the child's/young person's words and report the disclosure to the Child Safety Officer or the Principal, police or Child Protection.
- It is the responsibility of the Principal or, if unable to, the Assistant Principal to manage the College's response, including responding appropriately to the child, monitoring procedural compliance and to ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

6.1.2 If a parent/carer says their child has been abused at school or raises a concern:

- Explain that ACE has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.
- Ask about the wellbeing of the child/young person.
- Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words.
- Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
- Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as Advance College's Leadership Team or Child Safety Officer, the police or Child Protection.
- Do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child/young person safe.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together.
- Ask what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.

- Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

You need to be aware that some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers in reporting allegations of abuse. For example, people from some cultures may experience anxiety when talking with police, and communicating in English may be a barrier for some. You need to be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible, such as having an interpreter present (who could be a friend or family member).

If an allegation of abuse involves an Aboriginal child, you will need to ensure a culturally appropriate response. A way to help ensure this could include engaging with parents of Aboriginal children, local Aboriginal communities or an Aboriginal community- controlled organisation.

Some children with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident. For example, children with hearing or cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident, including through sign language interpreters.

Vulnerable students may find it difficult to disclose an incident. For example, they may feel that they haven't been heard or valued in the past. They may be anxious and need the support of a 'trusted adult'. You need to be sensitive to these issues.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Legal Responsibilities

While the Child Safe standards focus on organisations, every adult who reasonably believes that a child has been abused, whether in their organisation or not, has an obligation to report that belief to authorities.

Fulfilling the roles and responsibilities contained in the above procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse.

Creation Date:	Next Review:	Availability:	Actions:
Version One. Created 28/06/2022

Approved by the College Committee on: 10/08/2022 | 2024 or as required due to changes in relevant Acts, Laws, or should situations arise that require earlier consideration. | **Web:** ✔
K-drive: ✔
On request: ✔ | Communication to the whole College via the College newsletter in July each year. Circulate and discuss at the first College Committee each year. Consultation: College Committee – 25/05/2022 School Community – Information and link sent out via Compass portal 29/6/2022
- Student Voice meeting 16/6/2022 |