Murrayville Community College Child Safety Policy

Rationale:

All Victorian schools are required to have a child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety that details:

- the principles that will guide the school in developing policies and procedures to create and maintain a child safe school environment; and
- the actions the school proposes to take to:
    - (i) demonstrate its commitment to child safety and monitor the school's adherence to its child safety policy;
    - (ii) support, encourage and enable school staff, parents and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters; and
    - (iii) support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.

Aims:

- To promote child safety in the school environment we acknowledge the following:

All students have a right to:
- take part in learning programs that meet their individual needs.
- feel secure and to be safe in a caring and supportive environment.
- work and play without interference in an atmosphere of harmony and cooperation.
- receive respect, kindness and courtesy and to be treated with fairness.
- continue learning without disruption in a supportive environment.
- be valued for their individuality including: race, gender, cultural, physical or intellectual diversity.
- expect the school rules are fair, consistently implemented and respect the rights of all involved.

All students have a responsibility to:
- care and value themselves, fellow students, teachers and the school community.
- be safety conscious in relation to themselves and others.
- treat others with respect and good manners.
- follow the school rules.
- develop a sense of accountability for their own actions.
- work to achieve their personal best whilst allowing others to do the same.
- explore their full potential in their learning.

School staff adhere to the following standards about the ways in which school staff are expected to behave with children.
- School staff provide opportunities for all students to learn.
- School staff treat their students with courtesy and dignity.
- School staff maintain objectivity in their relationships with students.
- School staff are always in a professional relationship with the students in their school whether at school or not.

Implementation:

Procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of suspected child abuse

Forming a belief on reasonable grounds
A person may form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection after becoming aware that a child or young person's health, safety or wellbeing is at risk.

Reporting a reported incident
If a child discloses an incident of abuse to a staff member then a Child Safety incident report form should be completed. This should be done either by the child or by the staff member together with the child (Appendix 1).

Reporting a belief
Mandated staff members (Teachers and Principals) must make a report to Child Protection as soon as practicable after forming a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection.
Staff members, *whether or not mandated,* need to report to the Principal or Leading Teachers their belief when the belief is formed in the course of undertaking their professional duties. A report must be made as soon as practicable after forming the belief and on each occasion on which they become aware of any further reasonable grounds for the belief.
If one staff member has a different view from another staff member about making a report and the staff member continues to hold the belief that a child is in need of protection, that person is obliged to make a report.
Please refer to the Mandatory Reporting Policy for procedures in response to allegations of child abuse.

These procedures do not:
- prohibit or discourage school staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse to a person external to the school;
- state or imply that it is the victim's responsibility to inform the police or other authorities of the allegation;
- require staff to make a judgement about the truth of the allegation of child abuse; or
- prohibit staff from making records in relation to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse.

Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

- Risk management strategies have been developed within the following school policies"
  - *Mandatory Reporting Policy*
  - *Student Welfare Policy*
  - *Duty of Care Policy*
  - *Bullying and Harassment Policy*

- The Murrayville Community College Child Safety Code of Conduct for all staff, volunteers and School Council members, requires the observation of all Child Safe principles and expectation for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children (Appendix 2).

- The Murrayville Community College Recruitment Practices and checklist ensures that specific recruitment and screening practices are followed to reduce the risk of child abuse (Appendix 3).

- The Murrayville Community College Human Resource Practices ensure that there is screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel (Appendix 4).

  Reference:
  http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/dutyofcare.aspx

- If the school identifies risks of child abuse occurring in one or more school environments the authority must make a record of those risks and specify the action(s) the school will take to reduce or remove the risks (risk controls).
  Explanatory note:
  Different risk controls may be necessary for particular groups of children depending on the nature of the risk and the diversity of characteristics of children affected by the risk.

- As part of its risk management strategy and practices, the school must monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls.

- At least annually, the school must ensure that appropriate guidance and training is provided to the individual members of the school staff about:
  - individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse;
  - child abuse risks in the school environment; and
  - the school's current child safety standards.

<u>Strategies to promote child empowerment and participation</u>

- The school authority must develop strategies to deliver appropriate education about:
  - standards of behaviour for students attending the school;
  - healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality);
  - resilience; and
  - child abuse awareness and prevention.

- The school must promote the child safety standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children.

  Reference:
  http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/Pages/standards.html

Evaluation:
- This policy will be reviewed annually.

When First Approved : 20th June 2016

When Reviewed / Modified : 20th August 2018

APPENDIX 1 : Murrayville Community College Child Safety Incident Report

Incident details

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

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

Does the child identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

(Mark with an 'X' as applicable)

No ☐   **Yes, Aboriginal** ☐   **Yes, Torres Strait Islander** ☐

Please categorise the incident

Physical violence ☐

Sexual offence ☐

Serious emotional or psychological abuse ☐

Serious neglect ☐

Please describe the incident

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

Parent/carer/child use :

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

Office use:

Date incident report received:	
Staff member managing incident:	
Follow-up date:	
Incident ref. number:	

Has the incident been reported?

Child protection	
Police	
Another third party (please specify):	

Incident reporter wishes to remain anonymous?
(Mark with an 'X' as applicable)

Yes ☐   **No** ☐

All incident reports must be stored securely by the Principal / leadership.

APPENDIX 2 : Murrayville Community College Child Safety Code of Conduct 2017

All staff, volunteers and School Council members of Murrayville Community College are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below.

All personnel of Murrayville Community College are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:

- adhering to Murrayville Community College child safe policy at all times / upholding Murrayville Community College statement of commitment to child safety at all times

- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse

- treating everyone with respect

- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another

- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal child's self-identification)

- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination)

- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities)

- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child

- reporting any allegations of child abuse to Murrayville Community College Principal / leadership, and ensure any allegation is reported to the police or child protection

- reporting any child safety concerns to Murrayville Community College Principal / leadership

- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe

- encouraging children to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.

Staff and volunteers must not:

- develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)

- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps. Sitting on laps could be appropriate sometimes, for example while reading a storybook to a small child in an open plan area)

- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)

- do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes

- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities)

- use inappropriate language in the presence of children

- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children

- discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability

- have any online social contact with a current student

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

By observing these standards you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to Murrayville Community College Principal / leadership.

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

I agree to adhere to this Code of Conduct:

Name: …………………………………..................................

Signature: …………………………………………………………

Date: …………………………………………........

* A hard copy of this document is to be stored in the staff and volunteer register and updated:

- By teaching staff annually when their VIT registration cards are copied

- By Volunteers as their working with children checks are updated

- By all School Councillors at the first meeting of the new school council after elections in March

APPENDIX 3 : Murrayville Community College Recruitment Practices

The child safe standards require organisations that provide services for children to have recruitment and screening practices that reduce the risk of child abuse.

Recruitment checklist for Murrayville Community College

Robust recruitment processes help ensure the best applicants are employed. From advertising through to conducting interviews and checking the background of applicants, it is important that each step is done consistently and thoroughly.

This checklist will guide Murrayville Community College through critical steps in the recruitment process. It includes objectives and examples for:

- selection criteria in job descriptions
- advertising
- face-to-face interviews including behavioural-based questions and questions about motives for wanting to work with children
- Working with Children Checks <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au>
- police record checks and identity checks <www.police.vic.gov.au> (including international police record checks where necessary)
- reference checks over the telephone with recent line managers
- probation periods.

Selection criteria

Developing appropriate selection criteria for the position is a valuable first step to reducing the risk of appointing someone who poses a child safety risk. It will also ensure that applicants have the specific knowledge and skills required for the position.

Examples of appropriate selection criteria may include:

'Must have experience working with children.'

'Must be able to demonstrate an understanding of appropriate behaviours when engaging with children.'

Does the selection criteria clearly state the experience, qualifications, qualities and attributes expected from the successful applicant?	
Does the selection criteria outline the supervision and accountability processes in place which support child safety?	

Remember to ensure the selection criteria provides for the safety of all children. The applicants should have the opportunity to indicate their understanding of, or any experience they have in working with children with diverse needs and/or backgrounds.

Does the selection criteria include a demonstration of the needs of children with a disability?	
Does the selection criteria include a demonstration of Aboriginal cultural safety and awareness?	
Does the selection criteria include a demonstration of cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds?	

Advertising

Planning your advertisement and its placement provides a good opportunity to demonstrate your commitment to safeguarding children and deter would–be offenders.

Does the advertisement include a message about the school's commitment to child safety?	
Does the advertisement include reference to your code of conduct and child safe policy?	
Does the advertisement inform applicants that appropriate rigorous reference and background checking will be undertaken, including a Working with Children Check and police record and identity check?	

It is imperative that Murrayville Community College promotes the safety, participation and empowerment of all children, including those with a disability. A suggested approach may be:

'This college promotes the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all children, including those with a disability. Applicants are welcome to elaborate on experience they may have working with children with a disability.'

Has the job advertisement included a statement about the school's commitment to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children, including those with a disability?	

It is important that Murrayville Community College be culturally safe for Aboriginal children, and encourages participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children. A suggested approach may be:

'This college promotes the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children, and encourages applications from Aboriginal peoples.

Applicants are welcome to elaborate on experience they may have working with Aboriginal children and/or communities.'

Has the job advertisement included a statement about the school's commitment to cultural safety, inclusion and empowerment of Aboriginal children, their families and communities?	

It is important that Murrayville Community College promotes the safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds. A suggested approach may be:

'This college promotes the safety and wellbeing of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and encourages applications from people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Applicants are welcome to elaborate on experience they may have working with children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background.'

Has the job advertisement included a statement about this school's commitment to the safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds?	

Interviews

The interview process is a very important step in selecting the right people for Murrayville Community College and in identifying any people who may pose a risk to children. Sufficient time needs to be allowed to plan and prepare for the interview process, and form an interview panel with the right mix of experience and skills to carry out the interview, ensuring that all panel members are clear on what the position requires.

An open-ended style of behavioural-based questioning will give you insight into the applicant's values, attitudes and understanding of professional boundaries and accountability. Some useful questions may include:

'Tell us about why you want to work with children?'

'Describe a time when you had to manage a child whose behaviour you found challenging?'

'Tell us about a time when you had to comfort a distressed child?'

Has the panel prepared a list of open–ended questions which will determine how the interviewee will behave in certain situations?	

Take notice of the panel members own thoughts and feelings when interacting with the applicant. Ask for more information if the applicant does not provide sufficient information in his or her responses.

Did the panel notice any warning signs such as:

• Unexplained lengthy gaps in employment history	
• The applicant says they do not value or 'need' supervision	
• The applicant is evasive or inconsistent in his or her answers	

Pre-employment screening

Screening applicants (including for paid and volunteer positions) is a good tool for helping to prevent people who may abuse children from entering Murrayville Community College.

Police checks

It is important to be upfront and ask the applicant if they have any criminal convictions, formal disciplinary action taken against them, or any finding of improper or unprofessional conduct. This could involve the applicant signing a declaration as part of an application form.

The panel could also cover this in a face-to-face interview. This may be challenging for the interview panel, particularly if the person is already known to the members, but the applicant's response should demonstrate a sufficient level of professionalism as well as an understanding of your obligations. To help introduce this difficult topic, the panel could say to the applicant that we have some specific questions about child safety because this school takes child safety seriously.

Have the panel included a question about whether the applicant has any criminal convictions, cautions, other legal or pending cases, including formal disciplinary action, which may affect their suitability to work with children?	
If addressed during a face-to-face interview, did the panel take notice of how the applicant responds to questions with regard to his or her words and body language?	
Have you undertaken a police record check (which includes identity check)?	

Working with Children Check

Under the *Working with Children Act 2005*, people who are doing child-related work, and who are not exempt[1], need a Working with Children Check. This applies to both paid and volunteer workers. Full details of the Working with Children Check process can be found on the Working with Children website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au>.

Does the applicant hold a valid Working with Children Check, if required? Have you checked the validity of their Working with Children Check <online.justice.vic.gov.au/wwccu/checkstatus.doj>?. OR If the applicant does not hold a valid Working with Children Check, and it is required, has the applicant provided evidence that they have applied for a Working with Children Check, and does Murrayville Community College have processes to follow up pending applications?	
Has the applicant provided the panel with evidence of their Working with Children Check, or evidence of their application for a Working with Children Check?	

Referee checks

The panel should always talk to at least two referees as this can provide insight into the applicant's character and skills. Line managers, particularly the most recent, are likely to provide you with the most accurate reference. Where possible, referees that can provide insights into the applicant's experience working with children should be contacted.

Do the referees provided by the applicant include line managers who can be objective, rather than colleagues or friends?	
Has the applicant provided their most recent line manager as a referee? If not, have they provided you with a satisfactory reason?	
Has the panel spoken to at least two of the referees by telephone? Did they confirm with them their name and position provided to them by the applicant?	

[1] For example, teachers and police officers are exempt because they undergo other thorough backing checking.

When speaking with the referees, the panel should seek to establish the referee's relationship with the applicant, including:

- how long the applicant and referee worked together
- the specifics of the position
- the applicant's perceived strengths and weaknesses
- whether the referee would hire the person again, particularly in a role working with children, and whether they have any concerns about the applicant working with children.

You should ask referees directly about any concerns they may have about the applicant working with children. To help introduce this difficult topic, the panel could say we have some specific questions about child safety because this school takes child safety seriously.

Take note of any pauses or gaps in the referee's responses.

Ask behaviour-based questions like:

• 'What did the applicant do when…[for example, they had to comfort a distressed child]?'	
• 'Do you have any concerns about the applicant's attitude towards Aboriginal peoples / people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds / people with a disability?'	
• 'Do you have any concerns about the applicant working with children?'	
• 'Would you employ this person again?'	

Additional checks
Additional checks will confirm the identity of the applicant and that their responses have been truthful.

Has the panel checked the identity of the applicant (for example, that their driver's licence/passport has the same name they have provided you)?	
Did the panel see a certified copy of the applicant's qualifications (if required)?	

Probation periods
Probation periods can help you assess a new staff member's performance and suitability for the job before confirming their permanent employment. If you have any concerns about the person working with children, you should seriously consider whether you want them to remain in the job at this school.

The length of probation periods can vary and is usually between three and six months.

You should consider whether the person should receive closer supervision and additional training throughout the probation period. A probation period can offer an opportunity to set goals with new staff members and identity training, supervision and other support needs.

Appendix 4 : Murrayville Community College Human Resource Practices

The child safe standards require Murrayville Community College to have screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel.

Overview

It is important for Murrayville Community College to have strong human resources practices to help protect children from abuse.

Murrayville Community College should foster a culture of openness and inclusiveness, as well as be aware that people who may wish to harm children could target this school. Robust human resource practices are a good way of reducing these risks.   Human resource practices include the recruitment, training and supervision of all personnel.

To achieve this, Murrayville Community College needs to provide opportunities for employees and volunteers to develop and maintain skills to ensure child safety. This will support staff and volunteers to understand the importance of child safety and wellbeing, and enable them to consistently follow child safety policies and procedures.

Murrayville Community College should reinforce its commitment to child safety by recognising the good work and practices of employees and volunteers in keeping children safe and protected.

Training and induction

Training and education is an important tool to help people understand that child safety is everyone's responsibility. Employees and volunteers (in addition to parents/guardians and children) need to be supported to discuss child protection issues and to detect signs of potential child abuse.

Staff should receive induction and ongoing training. New staff will need support and information when they begin their new role, and existing staff might need to develop new skills and knowledge to meet the requirements of their positions and expand their career options.

Training and support also promotes an awareness of the appropriate standards of care required to be met by employees and volunteers to ensure that the school meets its duty of care when providing services to children.

It is essential that the staff commit to promoting the safety and wellbeing of children, for example by signing Murrayville Community College's Child Safety code of conduct. Training should enhance the skills and knowledge of all employees and volunteers, and reduce exposure to risks.

Employees and volunteers working with children need to receive training in the following areas:

• identifying, assessing and reducing or removing child abuse risks

• MCC's policies and procedures (including the code of conduct and child safe policy)

• legislative requirements, such as obligations to report child abuse[1], reduce and remove known risks of child abuse[2], and to hold Working with Children Checks[3] where required

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[1] The failure to disclose criminal offence requires adults in Victoria to report to police a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child (unless they have a reasonable excuse for not doing so). More information about failure to disclose is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>.

Failure to disclose does not change mandatory reporting obligations. Certain professionals are mandatory reporters, meaning they are required to report to the Department of Health and Human Services if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical and sexual abuse. More information about mandatory reporting is available in the *Child protection manual* <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/intake/overview-of-intake-of-reports-under-the-children,-youth-and-families-act/1122-mandatory-and-other-required-reporting>.

- how to handle a disclosure or suspicion of abuse, including MCC's reporting guidelines
- cultural awareness training.

Training can be formal such as:

- higher education training and accreditation
- training offered by external organisations
- training developed and delivered internally
- on-the-job training meeting key objectives.

Training can also be informal such as:

- inviting other professionals to speak at meetings or functions
- inviting local Aboriginal Elders, Aboriginal community controlled organisations and community members to speak at meetings and events
- inviting local culturally and/or linguistically diverse community members to speak at meetings and events
- internal mentoring and coaching.

Supervision

Supervision of employees and volunteers should be managed in a way that protects children from abuse and improves accountability and performance, without being onerous or heavy-handed. As a matter of good practice, new employees and volunteers should be supervised regularly to ensure they understand their role and learn skills, as well as to check that their behaviour towards children is appropriate. Any warning signs should be reported through appropriate channels, including our internal reporting procedures (such as our child safety officer and leadership), the Department of Health and Human Services (child protection), or police if a child is believed to be at imminent risk.

Performance and development review

A proactive performance development strategy should be used to improve employees and volunteers skills and knowledge on child safety. This is also an opportunity to improve knowledge and skills in working with children, as well as recognising and responding to suspected abuse.

Performance should be measured against the school's standards of conduct and care to ensure that employees and volunteers meet expected outcomes. These standards must align with those of the code of conduct and child safe policy so everyone can be aware of the expectations of MCC and appropriate behaviour.

Code of conduct and disciplinary procedures

Disciplinary procedures would be the consequence of breaches of the MCC child safety code of conduct.

Employees and volunteers should be aware of reporting and how to communicate concerns regarding the improper behaviour of any person within MCC. All staff members should also be aware of their duty to raise concerns about the behaviour of any person who may present a risk of child abuse, without fear of repercussions.

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[2] The failure to protect criminal offence applies to people within organisations who knew of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse by someone in the organisation and had the authority to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so. More information about failure to protect is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence>.

[3] For more information about Working with Children checks visit the working with children website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au>.

The MCC Child Safety code of conduct will be publicly available on the school's website. Children and their families should be encouraged to raise any concerns about the behaviour of any person, and can expect to be listened to and supported.