



Child Protection and Safety Policy

Covenant College has developed the following Child Protection and Safety Policy. This policy is an overarching document that provides key elements of our approach to protecting children from abuse.

The policy forms the foundation of the College's procedures, practices, decision-making processes and ultimately the College's culture with respect to child safety.

It is designed to be published on our public website as well as communicated through other mediums such as newsletters, our annual report and in induction and welcome packs for Covenant College Board members, staff and Volunteers. A PDF version of Covenant College's Child Protection and Safety Policy is available [here](#).

The College's Child Protection and Safety Policy has been approved and endorsed by the College's Covenant College Board and is regularly reviewed by the Board.

Our Child Protection and Safety Policy

Objectives

This policy provides the framework for:

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

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Child abuse includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect and a child's exposure to family violence. Covenant College is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse and demonstrates this commitment

through the implementation of a comprehensive Child Protection Program designed to keep children safe.

At Covenant College we have a zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The College regards its child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture.

Child Safe Values & Principles

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

1. All children have the right to be safe.
2. The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
3. The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected.
4. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Safety Code of Conduct and Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy.
5. The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.
6. Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our College community.
7. Procedures are in place to screen all staff, Direct Contact Volunteers**, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers who have direct contact with children.
8. Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
9. Child protection training is mandatory for all Covenant College Board members, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers.
10. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the College community.
11. Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
12. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

***Direct Contact Volunteers are those volunteers who are involved in providing support, guidance, and supervision directly to students and could potentially have direct contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service.*

The Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic) defines 'direct contact' as any contact between a person and a child (aged under 18) that involves:

- *physical contact; or*
- *face to face contact; or*
- *contact by post or other written communication; or*
- *contact by telephone or other oral communication; or*
- *contact by email or other electronic communication.*

Examples of Direct Contact Volunteer activities may include volunteers involved in College camps and excursions, coaching sporting teams or assisting in learning activities.

Child Protection Program

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

Our Child Protection Program relates to all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse. It includes:

- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and associated key risk indicators;
- clear procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse;
- strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, parents and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child protection matters;
- procedures for recruiting and screening Covenant College Board members, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers;
- procedures for reporting reportable conduct and/or misconduct;
- pastoral care strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe;
- policies with respect to cultural diversity and students with disabilities;
- a child protection training program;
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children;
- guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality;
- policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Victorian Child Safe Standards); and
- a system for continuous review and improvement.

As a part of Covenant College's induction process, all staff and Direct Contact Volunteers are required to complete a selection of training modules on the content of our Child Protection Program.

All staff, Direct Contact Volunteers and Covenant College Board members are provided with additional, ongoing child protection training at least annually.

Staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers are supported and supervised by the College's Child Protection Officers to ensure that they are compliant with the College's approach to child protection.

Responsibilities

Child protection is everyone's responsibility. At Covenant College all members of the Covenant College Board and staff, as well as Volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. Specific responsibilities include:

Covenant College Board

Each member of the Covenant College Board is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the College's Child Protection and Safety Policy and the Child Protection Program to be effectively implemented within the College and are responsible for holding the Principal and leadership team accountable for effective implementation.

The Principal

The Principal is responsible, and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Protection and Safety Policy and the College's Child Protection Program are implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child protection culture is maintained within the College.

The Principal is also responsible for liaising directly with the relevant authorities seeking guidance in regards to the school's response to the alleged claim/report of child abuse (unless an allegation is in relation to the Principal).

Child Safe Team

Covenant College has appointed a Child Safe Team, which includes the College appointed Child Protection Officer, the Business Manager, the Principal, the Vice Principal, the Assistant Principal/Privacy Officer and the student welfare team. In conjunction with the Principal, the Child Safe Team is responsible for driving the organizational culture in regards to child safety and ensuring a child safe environment for all Covenant College students, including those students enrolled at the Kinder.

The Child Safe Team is also responsible for:

- Ensuring that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are aware of the relevant laws, organizational policies and procedures, and the organisation's Code of Conduct;
- Ensuring that all adults within the Covenant College community are aware of their obligation to report suspected sexual abuse of a child in accordance with these policies and procedures;
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of their obligation to observe the Community Code of Conduct (particularly as it relates to child safety);
- Providing support for staff, contractors and volunteers in undertaking their child protection responsibilities; and
- Maintaining confidentiality, yet reporting volume and type of incident if it occurs.

The College's Child Protection Officers

A number of senior staff members are nominated as the College's Child Protection Officers. Our Child Protection Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child protection issues. They are the first point of contact for raising child protection concerns within the College. They are also responsible for championing child protection within the College and assisting in coordinating responses to child protection incidents alongside the Principal.

The Child Protection Officer role will include facilitating and delivering the appropriate education for the Covenant College student body in regards to ensuring that all students have:

- An understanding of the Covenant College Student Code of Conduct;
- An understanding of what constitutes healthy and respectful relationships with both their peers and adults; and
- An understanding of what child abuse is and how to seek help if required.

The Child Protection Officer role is important in empowering the student voice and ensuring that all students feel respected and heard on issues such as child abuse.

Leadership Team

In addition to the Child Safe Team and Principal, all leadership team members and coordinators at Covenant College also have an important role to play, ensuring that they:

- Promote child safety at all times;
- Assess the risk of child abuse within their area of control and eradicate/minimize any risk to the extent possible;
- Educate employees about the prevention and detection of child abuse; and
- Assist in facilitating the reporting of any inappropriate behavior or suspected abusive activities.

All leadership team members and coordinators should be familiar with the types of abuse that might occur within their area of responsibility and be alert for any indications of such conduct.

Staff Members

All staff are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the College's Child Protection Officers.

Direct Contact Volunteers

All Direct Contact Volunteers, as defined in this policy, are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy, our Child Protection Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse.

It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the College's Child Protection Officers.

Indirect Contact Volunteers

Indirect Contact Volunteers (or 'Indirect Volunteers') are those volunteers who are involved in providing support and services whilst not directly assisting a specific group of students.

All Indirect Volunteers are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

All Indirect Volunteers are required by the College to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Safety Code of Conduct.

Examples of Indirect Contact Volunteer activities may include assisting with College administrative functions.

Third Party Contractors

All Third Party Contractors (service providers) engaged by the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

Third Party Contractors include, for example, maintenance and building personnel, consultants, casual teachers, tutors, sports coaches and college cleaners.

This also includes music teachers and other extra-curricular teachers and instructors who are engaged by students and their families directly, rather than the College, but have an agreement with the College to use the College's facilities.

Direct Contact Contractors

Direct Contact Contractors are:

- those who have direct contact** with students during the normal course of their work;
- those who may be in a position to establish a relationship of trust with a student notwithstanding that unsupervised access to students would be rare (for example full-time maintenance personnel); and
- any contractors whom a school is legally required to screen.

The Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic) defines 'direct contact' as any contact between a person and a child (aged under 18) that involves:

- physical contact; or
- face to face contact; or
- contact by post or other written communication; or
- contact by telephone or other oral communication; or
- contact by email or other electronic communication.

Indirect Contact Contractors

Indirect Contact Contractors are those contractors who do not meet the definition of "Direct Contact Contractor". Refer to Third Party Contractors' Responsibilities for more information.

All service providers engaged by the College are required by the College to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program.

The College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the service provider.

External Education Providers

An External Education Provider is any organisation that the College has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the College.

The delivery of such a course may take place on College premises or elsewhere.

All External Education Providers engaged by the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

All External Education Providers engaged by the College are required by the College to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program.

Covenant College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the External Education Provider.

Reporting Child Protection Concerns

Our Child Protection Program provides detailed guidance for members of the Covenant College Board, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers as to how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to one of our College's nominated Child Protection Officers. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.

Staff, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, Volunteers, students, parents/guardians and other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse or grooming are asked to contact one of the College's Child Protection Officers.

Communications will be treated confidentially on a "need to know basis".

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.

Policy & Program Review

Covenant College is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Protection Program. The Program is regularly reviewed for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child protection related laws, regulations and standards.