



ISLAMIC COLLEGE OF MELBOURNE

Child safety policy and statement of commitment

1) Rationale

This child safety policy is an overarching document that provides an overview of key elements of the Islamic College of Melbourne's strategies and approach to child safety. This policy also describes the college's commitment to keep children safe from harm. It forms the foundation of the college's procedures, practices, decision making processes, and ultimately the college's culture with respect to child safety.

To successfully embed a culture of child safety, the commitment to **zero tolerance of child abuse** is led by the college's governing authority and is openly and transparently shared throughout the college community. This child safety policy is accessible, publicly available and understood by the college community.

Our college's child safety policy:

- clearly states a zero tolerance of child abuse
- details the college's child safe processes and procedures, and links to existing documents that include child safety considerations - for example, its reporting procedures (including leadership responsibilities), how to respond to an allegation of child abuse, human resources and recruitment practices, and risk management strategy and procedures
- clearly states the college's commitment to cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability
- details expectations and requirements of staff and volunteers to ensure the protection of children, and the training and support staff receive
- includes contact details for people to access information in relation to child safety, such as the college's Child Safety Officers (Head of Primary and Head of Secondary). A Child Safety Officers is a person has knowledge of child safety issues and could be a point of contact for others who have questions or concerns or want to report an allegation of child abuse. The college's Child Safety Officers can be contacted on 03 8742 1739.

2) What is child abuse?

Child abuse is an act by parents or caregivers which endangers a child or young person's physical or emotional health or development. Child abuse can be a single incident, but usually takes place over time. In Victoria, under the Children Youth and Families Act 2005 a child or young person is a person under eighteen years of age.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from an injury inflicted by a child's parent or caregiver. The injury may be inflicted intentionally or may be the inadvertent consequence

of physical punishment or physically aggressive treatment of a child. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve the child in sexual activity and the child's parent or caregiver has not protected the child. Physical force is sometimes involved. Child sexual abuse involves a wide range of sexual activity. It includes fondling of the child's genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or other object, or exposure of the child to pornography.

Emotional abuse

Emotional Abuse occurs when a child's parent or caregiver repeatedly rejects the child or uses threats to frighten the child. This may involve name calling, put downs or continual coldness from the parent or caregiver, to the extent that it significantly damages the child's physical, social, intellectual or emotional development.

Neglect

Neglect is the failure to provide the child with the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, medical attention or supervision, to the extent that the child's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed.

3) Statement of commitment to child safety

The college is committed to child safety and to prevent child abuse by creating a college culture and structure to address any issues related to child abuse. All staff, volunteers and school members are responsible for supporting the safety of children by adhering to the code of conduct.

The college clearly opposes any practice that involves conduct of a reportable nature and will be constantly looking to implement measures and strategies that are aimed at preventing reportable conduct and other harm coming to children in its care.

The college is committed to:

- have zero tolerance for child abuse
- actively work to listen to and empower children
- having systems to protect children from abuse, and will take all allegations and concerns very seriously and responds to them consistently in line with the college's policies and procedures
- promoting cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

The college will be reviewing **every two years** the effectiveness of its child safe strategies and practices listed in this policy and the Code of Conduct. We encourage any ideas or suggestions from the college staff, students and/or community that may assist to identify any risk to child safety or improve child safe practices in the college. Furthermore, our strategies will be reviewed following any incidents, and will be documented and recorded. Any amendments, changes, adoption of new strategies or opportunities for improvement, an action plan will be developed to be implemented within a specific time frame. However, any changes or adopted recommendations/suggestions will be communicated to the college governing body for their approval. Following the approval of the governing body of any changes or recommendations relating to child safe practices, such changes or recommendations will then be communicated in staff and students. The changes or recommendation will be published on the college newsletter, website, parent portal and staff intranet sharepoint.

The college is committed to child safety and the following will be attended to in order to ensure student safety:

- screen and supervise staff and provide other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse – Refer to the college's Recruitment Policy and Practices
- manage the school environment on campus, online and at other locations – Refer to the college's Onsite Policy, Offsite Policy and Electronic Devices & Internet Use Policy

- monitor adherence to the policy or statement by ensuring that the policy is communicated clearly with the college's staff, students and community and make sure everyone understands their responsibilities and duties in respect to child safety matters
- support, encourage and enable staff to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters by conducting briefings, PD's and upload the child safety policy and other related policies on their college staff intranet sharepoint. Also, to encourage staff to discuss any child safety issues in the Professional Learning Team meetings and to minute their discussions and recommendations for follow up purposes
- support, encourage and enable parents to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters by conducting information sessions, uploading the child safety policy and other related policies on the parent portal and communicating it through the college newsletter
- support, encourage and enable children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters by conducting information sessions, briefings to inform them about their rights, responsibilities, how and whom they can approach to report any inappropriate behaviours relating to child safety or concerns
- support or assist children who disclose child abuse or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse by referring them to the college's Child Safety Officers and ensuring that the college maintains confidentiality unless legally required to disclose.

4) ICOM child safety strategies

Below are the college's child safety strategies. The college may amend, add or remove any of the listed strategies as the need arises or following any incidents. The college will review these strategies on an ongoing basis.

Strategies for the college's governing authority

- The college governing authority communicates that it has **zero tolerance of child abuse** (in any form).
- Child safety is a standing item for discussion at meetings of the college governing authority.
- Child safety strategies are developed and enhanced through ongoing review of the effectiveness of practice.
- An appropriate reporting process is in place for child abuse that includes overseeing outcomes.
- The college governing authority oversees the implementation and improvement of child safety strategies.
- The college governing authority communicates with the college community about the college's child safety strategies and their implementation.
- The college reports on child safety in its annual report.

Strategies for college staff (includes contractors and volunteers)

- Ensuring awareness of the child safety strategies and the allocated roles and responsibilities.
- Pre-employment reference checks that include checking for child safety.
- Checking of identification for staff as part of recruitment.
- Criminal history checks and confirming currency of Working with Children Check/Victorian Institute of Teaching registration.
- Obtaining certified copies of qualifications for staff as part of recruitment.
- Query gaps in employment history.
- Psychometric testing.
- Induction in child safety for all staff and visitors.

- Child safety is a standing item for discussion at staff and manager meetings.
- To train staff to detect inappropriate behaviour.
- Staff to report inappropriate behaviour.
- Screening and review of the suitability of existing staff through performance appraisal procedures.
- Positive behaviours are recognised and encouraged.
- Foster a culture of openness with approachable and supportive managers.
- No staff member is to meet with individual students behind closed doors, must always be visible to outside staff. This applies to overnight camps, counselling, first aid, bus travel, student with high support needs.

Strategies for students

- Students are made aware of how to detect and report inappropriate behaviour.
- Students are encouraged to report inappropriate behaviour.
- The college has nominated two Child Safety Officers that students can approach in relation to child safety concerns.
- The college has child safety reporting procedures.
- The college provides counselling and other resources to support students.
- Students are to notify the college's Child Safety Officers if they believe inappropriate behaviour has occurred.

Environment

- The college has child safety strategies in place for all physical environments, that includes:
 - regularly reviewing the physical environment to ensure all risks are identified and managed
 - assessing new or changed physical environments for child safety risks
 - supervising or monitoring activities.
- The college has child safety strategies for its online environments (e.g. student email, intranets, online learning systems, social media) including:
 - clear boundaries of roles between staff and students
 - proactive strategies to detect inappropriate behaviour such as online searches (Google, Facebook etc).
- Visitors are appropriately screened, supervised and made aware of the college's child safety strategies.

5) Our commitment to child safety

- Our college is committed to child safety.
- We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
- We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
- We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- Our college is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks.

- Our college has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- Our college is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.
- We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

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

6) Our students

This policy is intended to empower students who are vital and active participants in our college. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our college, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

7) Our staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our college.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree and sign to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

8) Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our college understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our college culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be inducted and will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our college's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to this college's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

9) Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our college understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. Please see the [Working with Children Check](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> for further information

We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision-making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

10) Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as a college take.

11) Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

12) Legislative responsibilities

Our college takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our college will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

13) Risk management

In Victoria, schools are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include:

- risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock).). Staff to keep doors open when meeting with individual students or they should be visible to other through glass or windows
- online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in college on social media, excluding the college email)
- monitor student interactions in the college grounds between the Primary and Secondary students (for example, boys/girls' improper interactions, senior students with junior students)
- toilet/changing room facilities are assigned by age groups and strictly ensure that senior students do not use the junior students' toilets/changing rooms
- toilet/changing room facilities are assigned for males and females separately, strictly ensure that male students only use the male facilities and female students only use female facilities
- students are not allowed to remain in the classroom during recess or lunch times without appropriate supervision
- staff are to be vigilant with regards to isolated areas in the college to avoid possible harassment or bullying
- students hugging staff or vice versa is prohibited, even if it is part of the person's culture
- staff are to maintain a professional staff/student relationship at all times
- male teachers are not to touch or tap Secondary female students
- female teachers are not to touch or tap Secondary male students
- college must seriously investigate any accusations made by students or staff members
- college must take measures to protect any student or staff member who report any concerns and ensure they are safe

Refer to related policies in this regard, such as the Social Media Policy, Electronic Devices and Internet Use Policy, OHS Policy, Emergency Management Plan, Child safety policy and Statement of Commitment... etc.

14) Regular review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

15) Allegations, concerns and complaints

Our college takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

Besides the college, all staff members have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above) and refer to the procedure for reporting child abuse in the college's Mandatory Reporting Policy.

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred, then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

16) Further information

Further information on child safe standards can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services website <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/children,-youth-and-family-services/creating-child-safe-colleges>.

Additional resources for colleges in the child safe standards toolkit can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services website: <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards>. In particular, **An Overview to the Victorian child safe standards**, has information to help colleges understand the requirements of each of the child safe standards, including examples of measures colleges can put in place, a self-audit tool and a glossary of key terms: <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/___data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc>

Registered schools can contact the Department of Education and Training: child.safe.schools@edumail.vic.gov.au

Early childhood services operating under the National Quality Framework or *Children's Services Act 1996* should contact: licensed.childrens.services@edumail.vic.gov.au

Licensed children's services enquiry line: 1300 307 415

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