BENTON JUNIOR COLLEGE

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

Rationale

On 26 November 2015, the Victorian Parliament passed the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015 to introduce child safe standards into law. The standards will commence from 1 January 2016 for most organisations working with children, with the aim of promoting cultural change in the way organisations manage the risk of child abuse and neglect.

The child safe standards are part of the Victorian Government's response to the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations. The Betrayal of Trust Report found that while the majority of children are safe in organisations and in the community, more work could be done to strengthen existing approaches to child safety.

The child safe standards aim to drive cultural change in organisations that provide services for children so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in everyday thinking and practice.

Benton Junior College (BJC) is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all students at the college.

Aims

BJC staff are committed to safety and wellbeing of all students. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

BJC has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Our College is committed to providing a child safe environment where students feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

Every person involved at BJC has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all students is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

In planning, decision-making and operations school staff will endeavour to:

- take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
- value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
- foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
- respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
- provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
- engage only the most suitable people to work with children, providing high quality supervision and professional development for staff;
- ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues;
- report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
- share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
- value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers."

Implementation

BJC will implement the Child Safe Standards to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students at the College and promote an organisational culture that manages the risk of child abuse and neglect.

Our College has developed policies and procedures that aim to keep children safe. The Standards will provide a framework to identify gaps and improve policy and practices relating to child safety.

The Child Safe Standards:

To create and maintain a child safe organisation, an entity to which the standards apply must have:

Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, involving effective leadership arrangements.

Standard 2: A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety (See our school's Commitment to Child Safety Policy, attached).

Standard 3: A Code of Conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children (see our College's Child Safety Code of Conduct Policy, attached).

Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel (See VIT and Working with Children Policies).

Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse (DET Mandatory Reporting policy which can be found at http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/childprotection.aspx). Also refer to our school's Mandatory Reporting Policy.

Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse (Appendix 2).

Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children (See our school's Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy).

Role of a School Child Safety Officer

Our school's Child Safety Officer role will be fulfilled by the school's Wellbeing Coordinator and Wellbeing Leader and will involve the following:

Provide authorative advice:

- act as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of child safety;
- liaise with the Principal and College leaders to maintain the visibility of child safety; and
- lead the development of the College's child safety culture, including being a child safety champion and providing coordination in communicating, implementing, monitoring, enhancing and reporting on strategies to embed a culture of child safety.

Raise Awareness

- ensure the College's policies are known and used appropriately;
- ensure the College's Child Safety Policy is reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the College accountability framework;
- ensure the Child Protection Policy is available publicly and parents are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the College in this; and
- be alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers.

Encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings in any measures to protect them.

Train

Being authoritative in providing advice by:

- keeping their skills up to date with appropriate training carried out every two years;

- having a working knowledge of how the Department of Human Services (DHS) and Community Service Organisations support and respond to child safety needs;

- attending and contributing to child protection case meetings effectively when required to do so;

- keeping detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals;

- ensuring each member of staff has access to and understands the College's child safety policy and procedures, especially new and part time staff; and

- making sure staff are aware of training opportunities and the latest DHS and DET policies and guidance.

Risk management

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

The College has risk management strategies in place for staff 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), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in schools on social media). Please refer to Appendix 2, Child Safety Risk Management Matrix.

Date created	June 2016
Date ratified by School Council	August 2016
Date to review policy	August 2018

Appendix 1

Benton Junior College

Child Safe Definitions:

Definitions

A full list of definitions for Ministerial Order No. 870 is available at www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe.

Child abuse includes -

- any act committed against a child involving:
    - a sexual offence;
    - an offence under section 49B(2) of the *Crimes Act 1958* (grooming);
    - physical violence;
    - serious emotional or psychological harm; and
    - serious neglect of a child.

Child-connected work means work authorised by the College governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school;
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems); and
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

School staff means:

- A staff member in a government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:
    - employed under Part 2.4 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (ETR Act) in the government teaching service;
    - employed under a contract of service by the Council of the school under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act;
    - a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary);
    - In a non-government school, an individual working in a school environment who is;
    - directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority;

- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary); and
- a minister of religion.

School governing authority *means:*

- the proprietor of a school, including a person authorised to act for or on behalf of the proprietor;
- the governing body for a school (however described), as authorised by the proprietor of a school or the ETR Act;
- the Principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school, the school governing body, or the ETR Act.

Appendix 2

Benton Junior College

Child Safety Risk Management Program:

At BJC the child safety risk management strategy is a formal and structured approach to managing risks associated with child safety. Our College Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct clearly outlines our commitment to implementing the seven Standards for child safety as outlined in the Ministerial Order No. 870.

At BJC our process includes risk assessment (see matrix below), implementation of controls and a monitoring and review process to ensure the currency of the risk management approach.

Risk Rating Matrix

RISK RATING		Consequence				
		Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
Likelihood	Almost Certain	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
	Likely	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme
	Possible	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme
	Unlikely	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
	Rare	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium

Child Safety Risks and Risk Management Strategies

The list below comprises an inventory of potential child safety risk and risk management strategies.

Risks

- lack of an organisational culture of child safety;
- development of a culture of not reporting issues;
- natural trust of long term employees (who may have developed issues over time);
- children alone with one other person unsupervised;
- recruitment of an inappropriate person;
- inappropriate behaviour not reported;
- harassment via email, SMS or other media;

- unsupervised recreational or other activities;
- ad-hoc contractors on the premises (e.g.trades);
- vulnerability of staff and students due to unknown personal issues;
- unknown people and environments at excursions and camps; and
- false allegations.

Risk Management Strategies

- implement an effective child safety risk management strategy;
- child Safety Code of Conduct;
- child safety reporting procedures;
- induction for all visitors, staff, volunteers and contractors;
- train students and staff to detect inappropriate behaviour;
- counselling and other resources;
- clear windows in walls to enable visibility of occupants;
- non-lockable doors in hot spots;
- assessment of new or changed physical environments for child safety risks;
- supervision or monitoring of activities;
- online searches;
- performance management procedures;
- pre-employment reference checks that include checking for child safety; and
- criminal history checks.

At BJC the Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct require staff to monitor risk and risk management for all students.