STUDENT SAFETY & WELLBEING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Last Review: August 2025	**Constructed / Reviewed by:** Mentone Grammar on advice from Russell Kennedy Lawyers
Next Review: August 2027 (at least every two years (thereafter or more frequently after a significant student safety incident)	**Approval Required:** Board Motion
Policy Number: 6	**Board Sign Off Date:** 21 October 2025 **Implementation Date**: 10.11.2025

1 Statement of Context and Purpose

1.1 Mentone Grammar (the **School**) is committed to protecting its students from all aspects of harm, and has established strategies, practices, policies and procedures to uphold this public commitment.

1.2 All policies, protocols and procedures flow from the school's vision:

To develop resilient young people with a wide range of skills, interests, and attributes to find their place in an ever-changing world, through a leading educational environment which challenges and motivates within a caring community.

1.3 The School takes a zero tolerance approach to any behaviours that jeopardise student safety and wellbeing (including child abuse and reportable conduct). The School regards its student safety responsibilities with the utmost importance and strives to deliver an educational curriculum that promotes the School's ethos, vision and values of Caring, _Discipline, Endeavour, Integrity, Resilience,_ Respect, and _Service_.

1.4 The School's aim is to create a space where students can learn in a calm and focused environment characterised by ethical behaviour and defined professional boundaries, and where they feel safe and supported by the School.

1.5 The School recognises that any person in authority within, or in relation to the School has a statutory duty under section 49O of the _Crimes Act 1958_ (Vic) to protect students studying at the School from any substantial risk that they will become the victim of a sexual offence committed by another person who is 18 years of age or more and associated with the School.

1.6 In addition, the School has a pastoral, moral and legal responsibility to create an inextricable connection between student safety and learning, especially in a personalised learning environment where the School discovers what motivates and inspires its students, and focuses on their strengths and ambitions.

1.7 This connection will be the foundation of all decisions made, and actions taken by the School when delivering quality education to its students. At all times, the ongoing safety of its students will be at the forefront of mind, and the School's primary focus.

1.8 The School treats seriously its reporting obligations in relation to student safety matters, including to CCYP, Child Protection and Victoria Police. The School recognises that whilst reporting obligations may differ depending on a person's position within the School, all staff are required to uphold the ethos of this policy by ensuring that student safety and wellbeing matters are reported internally, and externally where required.

1.9 As such, this policy sets out how the School will meet its responsibilities and commitment to student safety and wellbeing and is a child safety policy made in accordance with *Ministerial Order No. 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and Boarding Premises*.

2 Application

2.1 This policy applies to all Board members, the Principal, employees, volunteers, contractors, labour hire workers, secondees and other authorised personnel required to perform functions on the School's premises, or at School-organised activities and events. Collectively, these individuals are referred to as 'staff'.

2.2 This policy extends to any other person who is engaged in student-connected work at the School, or that otherwise has direct and regular contact with the School's students (whether supervised or not).

3 Related Documents

3.1 Legislation

- *Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005* (Vic)
- *Worker Screening Act 2020* (Vic)
- *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic)
- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic)
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic)
- *Ministerial Order 1359*

3.2 Policies

- Student Safety Staff Code of Conduct
- Responding to Student Safety Concerns Policy
- Student Safety Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Student Code of Conduct

3.3 Overview of Student Safety and Wellbeing policies and documents

Document	Overview
Student Safety and Wellbeing Policy	This policy sets out the School's overarching obligations and commitment to ensuring student safety and wellbeing and summarises the School's strategies for achieving these. The policy also explains how the School's other student safety and wellbeing policies and procedures interact.

Staff Code of Conduct	This code outlines how staff behaviours align with the School's commitment to student safety and wellbeing, and what behaviours are unacceptable.
Student Safety and Wellbeing - Raising and Responding to Concerns Policy	This policy outlines how members of the school community may raise concerns about child abuse, reportable conduct and other student safety and wellbeing matters. This policy sets out how the School will respond to such concerns (including by complying with the School's mandatory reporting obligations).
Student Safety and Wellbeing – Record Retention Policy	This policy outlines the School's obligations with respect to keeping records relating to the care, safety and welfare of students, and adopts the Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards.

3.4   Fact sheets

- Grooming offence | Department of Justice and Community Safety Victoria

- Failure to disclose offence | Department of Justice and Community Safety Victoria

- Failure to protect: a new criminal offence to protect children from sexual abuse | Department of Justice and Community Safety Victoria

4   Overarching values and principles

4.1   Mentone Grammar's approach to student safety is guided by a number of overarching principles and values (which are set out below) that guide the development and regular review of strategies, practices, policies and procedures to uphold our commitment to protect students from all forms of harm:

- All students at the School have a right to be safe and to feel safe.

- The safety and wellbeing of students is the School's paramount consideration.

- The views of students and a student's privacy must be respected.

- Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour by staff with students must be established, including in the Student Safety Staff Code of Conduct.

- The safety and wellbeing of students is dependent upon the existence of a student safe culture.

- Student safety awareness is embodied, promoted and openly discussed within our School community.

- Families can participate in decisions affecting their child and they, and the School community, are engaged and informed about the School's approach to student safety and wellbeing.

- The School community is informed about the School's operations and governance.

- Procedures are in place to screen all staff and external education providers who engage in student-connected work (whether occurring on the School grounds or at a location connected to the School).

- Student safety is everyone's responsibility.

- Annual student safety training is mandatory for all members of the Board, the Principal, staff and anyone else otherwise engaged by the School in relation to student-connected work.

- Procedures for reporting and responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse or reportable conduct (including the complaints process and supports available) are clearly communicated and accessible for all members of the School community. This includes students and otherwise, members of the school community, who must have access to information and support in a reader friendly, accessible, culturally safe and age appropriate manner.

- Students from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds should receive special care and support.

- Students who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander should receive special care and support.

- Students with a disability should receive special care and support.

- Staff have regard to a student's diverse circumstances and needs, so that they can provide support and respond to those who are vulnerable and to ensure equity is upheld in policy and practice.

- Staff working with students will be suitable and supported to ensure student safety and wellbeing values are reflected in the School environment.

- Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of students in relation to visitors to the School, including third parties contracted to provide services either directly or indirectly to or for students.

5   Statement of Commitment to Student Safety

Set out below, is the School's publicly available statement of commitment to student safety and wellbeing.

A student safety and wellbeing culture

Creating and maintaining a student safe culture requires input from the entire School community. Our aim is to provide a safe environment that aligns with Mentone Grammar School's ethos, vision and values of *Caring, Discipline, Endeavour, Integrity, Resilience, Respect and Service.*

To achieve this, we promote a progressive education model that motivates, nurtures and prepares each generation for the demands of its time.

Through our processes and practices, we also ensure that a student safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels of the School, from the top down to the bottom up. Accordingly, student safety and wellbeing is embedded in our School leadership, governance and culture. We do this by setting clear expectations regarding student safety to our School community (including staff and students), and ensuring that at all times, our governance arrangements facilitate the implementation of this policy (including by making student safety a standing agenda item and reviewing the School's student safe processes across all levels).

The commitments, values and principles which guide the School are further outlined below.

Support and engagement of all students

The School appreciates that a student safety and wellbeing environment looks different for every student, and in delivering this, supports and respects the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as students with a disability or who are otherwise vulnerable (including students who identify as LGBTQIA+, and those with challenging home situations).

The School also appreciates that a student safe environment is contingent on a culturally safe environment, which requires proactive and ongoing efforts to maintain.

Our primary focus in delivering personalised education and through decision-making, is that all students are safe, feel safe, and are able to create and develop a range of strategies and skills, which can be used flexibly to flourish in all aspects of their lives. As such, we support and encourage students to talk openly and share their views, particularly about matters that directly impact them.

The School will aim to ensure students (and their parents) are provided with the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain a student's own personal safety and wellbeing, including:

a) Understanding, identifying, discussing and reporting student safety matters.

b) Standards of behaviour for students attending the School.

c) Healthy and respectful relationships (including those relating to gender and sexuality).

d) Resilience.

The School will aim to ensure that staff are provided with the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain a student and culturally safe environment, including through:

a) Actively supporting and encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families to:

   o Express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights.

   o Facilitate participation and inclusion in all aspects of School life.

Implementing and embedding strategies within the School community that acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and students.

Cultural training to improve understanding and respect (particularly with regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture), appreciation of culturally sensitive issues, including using appropriate language when referring to individuals or communities, and to equip staff to build culturally safe environments for children and young people.

Identifying, confronting, and addressing all incidents of racism, which will not be tolerated and appropriate consequences will be applied. We will involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and their families to ensure their voices are heard and their wellbeing is protected.

Ensuring that the School's strategies, practices, policies and procedures create a culturally safe and inclusive environment which values and respects the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and students, (including their families), as well as others from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Providing particular attention to the needs of students with a disability (or otherwise, additional needs), students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students who identify as LGBTQIA+ (or who are otherwise gender diverse) and those students who are unable to live at home.

Providing particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and promote and provide a culturally safe environment for them.

The School will promote its student safety and wellbeing practices to students in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand and user-friendly, including by:

a) The appointment of Student Safety Officers and a Senior Student Safety Officer who promote student safety and wellbeing (see below).

b) Training staff to recognise the indicators of harm to students, including harm caused by not only adults but also other children and young people, and harm in an online environment.

c) Collaborating with parents to ensure that they are provided with the information necessary to maintain consistent messaging about child abuse and reportable conduct.

d) Encouraging students to identify safe and unsafe environments and situations (including in an online environment).

e) Setting clear student safety and wellbeing standards so that staff, students and the School community are aware of the standards that are expected, and those which fall short of the School's expectations.

f) Distributing child-friendly publications, including student safety posters (e.g. PROTECT poster).

g) Clearly communicating on where students can access support, make a report about safety or wellbeing concerns, or otherwise obtain information.

h) Ensuring that students have identified safety and support networks to overcome any barriers that may prevent disclosure of safety or wellbeing concerns.

i) Ensuring staff are trained and supported to effectively implement this policy.

<u>Online Safety, Bullying and Harassment</u>

The School recognises that bullying and harassment can occur both in physical and online environments, and that negative online conduct, including through social media, messaging platforms, and other digital channels, can impact student wellbeing. The School takes a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment in all forms, including cyberbullying, online exclusion, and the sharing of harmful or inappropriate content.

In addition to School policies and procedures, parents/carers play a critical role in supporting student safety online. The School encourages families to actively monitor online activity, engage in open conversations with children about respectful digital behaviour, and work in partnership with the School to address any concerns. A shared approach between home and school is essential in promoting a safe and supportive online environment for all students.

Staff will respond promptly and appropriately when made aware of online behaviours involving members of the Mentone Grammar community that may affect student safety and wellbeing. Students and parents/carers are encouraged to report any concerns they experience or witness in digital spaces to a trusted adult and/or to external authorities such as the police. The School acknowledges that harm caused by online bullying can be just as

serious as harm caused in person and will treat such incidents with the same level of seriousness and care.

6   Raising and responding to student safety concerns

6.1   The School takes all allegations or disclosures of suspected child abuse and reportable conduct seriously and responds to such allegations and disclosures promptly and thoroughly.

6.2   All instances of suspected child abuse or reportable conduct, allegations of child abuse or reportable conduct, or student safety concerns and complaints must be reported to the Principal, a member of the Executive Team, or a Student Safety Officer, and will be treated very seriously and consistently according to the School's and individual staff member's internal and external reporting procedures and obligations.

6.3   The School has a Responding to Student Safety Concerns Policy, available on the School's website, which sets out:

   a)   How concerns about actual and suspected child abuse and reportable conduct may be raised with the School.

   b)   Who such concerns can be raised with at first instance, who include the Principal, the Executive Team and the School's Student Safety Officers.

   c)   How such concerns will be dealt with by the School (including by complying with any legislative reporting obligations, and the School's expectations of staff regarding information sharing and record keeping).

   d)   How the School will support or assist students (and their families) who disclose such concerns, or who are otherwise linked to such concerns.

6.4   The School will ensure that the Responding to Student Safety Concerns Policy is student-focused, and can be easily understood by the School community, in particular students.

6.5   If School staff believe a student is at immediate risk of child abuse, they must phone 000.

6.6   Other concerns may be raised by members of the School community in accordance with the Grievance Policy (Community).

Reporting a Sexual Offence: Failure to Protect Offence by a person in authority to protect a child under the age of 16 from criminal sexual abuse is also an offence under section 49O of the *Crimes Act*.

This applies where there is substantial risk that a child under the care, supervision or authority of an organisation (including a student of a school) will become a victim of a sexual offence by an adult associated with the School.

The person in a position of authority may be guilty of an offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

The offence requires an associated person to reduce or remove a 'substantial' risk. It is not a criminal offence to fail to address every possible risk that a sexual offence may be committed against a child. However, there are a number of factors to assist associated persons in identifying risks which amount to 'substantial' risks. These include:

a) The likelihood or probability that the child will become the victim of a sexual offence.

b) The nature of the relationships between a child and the adult who may pose a risk to the child.

c) The background of the adult who may pose a risk to the child, including any past or alleged misconduct.

d) Any vulnerabilities particular to a child, which may increase the likelihood that they may become the victim of a sexual offence.

e) Any other relevant fact which may indicate a substantial risk of a sexual offence being committed against a child.

7   Student Safe Employment Practices

7.1   We believe that the safety and wellbeing of students is dependent on the existence of a student safe culture. Establishing that culture requires effective staff recruitment, supervision and management practices.

All positions at the School that involve student-connected work will have a position description, which clearly sets out:

a) The position's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding student safety and wellbeing.

b) The applicant's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to education and student safety and wellbeing.

c) The School's ethos, values and commitment in respect of student safety and wellbeing.

d) How the School will support those who make disclosures.

7.2   Student safety and wellbeing is a paramount consideration during the recruitment process. All staff working with children and young people must be suitable and reflect the School's values and commitment to student safety and wellbeing in practice.

7.3   The School assesses the suitability of staff to undertake student-connected work through screening (including identity checks), qualification verifications, values-based interviews, work history checks and referee checks.

7.4   All prospective staff will be informed about the School's student safety practices (including but not limited to this policy, the Student Safety Staff Code of Conduct, the School's and individual staff member's record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations), and be subject to student safety screening in accordance with the School's obligations under legislation (including *Ministerial Order No. 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises*).

7.5   A successful applicant cannot commence at the School until written clearance in respect of student safety screening is obtained. A current VIT registration or WWCC (or equivalent) must be sighted and verified by the School and appropriately recorded before staff can engage in student-connected work. In the case of a WWCC, the School must be listed as the staff member's place of employment. This must remain active for the duration of their employment to ensure the School receives relevant updates or notifications.

7.6   Appropriate and mandatory induction regarding the School's student safety and wellbeing practices (including policies and procedures) will follow any successful appointment or engagement.

7.7   The School requires that staff act professionally, and in a way that embodies the School's public commitment to student safety and wellbeing throughout their time at the School. The School has a Student Safety Staff Code of Conduct, available on the School's website, which provides guidelines for staff on expected behavioural standards and responsibilities, and sets out examples of appropriate and inappropriate behaviours. The School will take appropriate disciplinary action where a staff member is found to have acted contrary to that Code, or the School's other policies and procedures regarding appropriate standards of behaviour.

7.8   Staff will otherwise be subject to regular supervision, training and periodic student safety checks, including to ensure their ongoing suitability for student-connected work.

7.9   The Director of Risk (and the Risk team) is responsible for taking reasonable steps to ensure all staff complete the School's mandatory student safety and wellbeing modules.

7.10   If for any reason, a staff member does not complete a mandatory student safety training or briefing, the School must direct the staff member to the relevant material and resources on the School's website (including the Responding to Student Safety Concerns Policy and Student Safety & Protection Policy) which amongst other things, address mandatory reporting obligations, and the offences of failure to protect and failure to disclose under the *Crimes Act*.

7.11   At least annually, the School will ensure that appropriate guidance and training is provided to Board members and relevant staff engaged in student-connected work about:

a)   Individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse and reportable conduct.

b)   Child abuse and reportable conduct risks in the school environment (including the online environment).

c)   The School's current student safety standards and practices.

7.12   The Board will ensure that privacy and employment law obligations are met when responding to student concerns and complaints.

8   Student Safety Officers

8.1   Mentone Grammar has appointed Student Safety Officers (**SSOs**) as a first point of contact to provide advice and support to students, parents, and staff regarding the safety and well-being of students at the School

8.2   The following Student Safety Officers may be contacted to provide advice and support:

Name	Position	Contact details
Peta Stubbs	Director of ELC	petast@mentonegrammar.net 0439 393 355
Belinda Klose	Head of Junior School	belindak@mentonegrammar.net 0400 193 226
Dan Newton	Head of Bayview	dann@mentonegrammar.net 0411 389 907

Jayne Scheumack	Acting Head of Greenways	jaynes@mentonegrammar.net 0431 164 781
Jason Mann	Head of Frogmore	jsm@mentonegrammar.net 0422 263 830
Bridgitte Roberts	Head of Wellbeing	bridgitter@mentonegrammar.net 0422021491
Student Safety Officers can also be contacted via Reception on **(03) 9584 4211**.		

8.3   Student Safety Officers are able to act as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of student safety and wellbeing and liaise with the Principal and the Executive Team to maintain the visibility of student safety. Staff are encouraged to speak with one of the Student Safety Officers should they hold any concerns relating to student safety and wellbeing.

8.4   School staff, students and parents can contact the Student Safety Officer for further information regarding student safety and wellbeing and for any questions or concerns or reports of suspected or alleged child abuse or reportable conduct

9   Risk Management

9.1   The School will develop and implement risk management strategies regarding student safety online and in the physical school environment without compromising a student's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.

9.2   These strategies will identify, control, remove and otherwise focus on preventing and reducing, the risk(s) of child abuse, reportable conduct and otherwise, risks to student safety and wellbeing by taking into account the nature of the environment, the activities expected to be conducted in that environment (including the provision of services by contractors or outside organisations), and the characteristics and needs of all students expected to be present in that environment.

9.3   In addition, these strategies will place a positive responsibility on ensuring that student safety and wellbeing is actively promoted at School.

9.4   Where the School identifies risks of actual or suspected child abuse or reportable conduct occurring in the online or physical school environment, it will make a written record of those risks and determine the action(s) it will take to remove or otherwise reduce the risks (risk controls and risk treatments).

9.5   The School will monitor, review and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls annually, and update these where required.

9.6   The School will ensure it creates, maintains and disposes of any records about student safety and wellbeing in line with the Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards, including minimum retention periods regarding these obligations. In addition, the School will detail its information sharing and record-keeping processes and ensure all staff (including volunteers) understand their relevant obligations.

10   Student Participation and Empowerment

10.1   The School recognises that a student safe culture is also contingent upon the participation and empowerment of students themselves.

10.2   Consistent with this understanding, the School will ensure:

a)   That students are informed about all their rights, including to safety, information and participation (for example, those in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child).

b)   That the importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged to help students feel safe and be less isolated.

c)   Where relevant, that students are offered access to child abuse (including sexual abuse) and reportable conduct prevention programs and other relevant information in an age-appropriate way.

d)   Staff are attuned to the signs of harm (including that caused by reportable conduct or child abuse) and facilitate child-friendly ways for students to express their views, participate in decision making and raise their concerns.

e)   The School has strategies and curriculum planning documents in place to develop a culture that facilitates participation and is responsive to the input of students.

f)   The School provides opportunities for students to participate and are responsive to their contributions, thereby strengthening confidence and engagement.

11   Reflection and Continuous Improvement

11.1   The School is committed to continual improvement that is responsive to emerging thinking, evidence and practice, so as to eliminate (where practicable) the possibility of student safety risks occurring in the first place. Where the School can improve, it will strive to do so. The School will report on the outcomes of any relevant review to the School community.

12   Student Safety Responsibilities

12.1   Society as a whole shares responsibility for promoting the safety and protection of students from child abuse and reportable conduct. In the School context, all members of the School community have a role to play.

12.2   However, specific responsibilities in respect of student safety and wellbeing are assigned to:

a)   The Board.

b)   The Principal.

c)   The Executive Team.

d)   Student Safety Officers.

e)   Staff.

f)   Students and parents/carers.

12.3   For further information, please refer to the Student Safety Responsibilities document.

13   Breach of this Policy

13.1   Mentone Grammar emphasises the need for staff to fully comply with the requirements of this policy.

13.2   Any school staff found to be in breach of the requirements of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or engagement (as the

case may be). Staff should refer to the Performance Management, Misconduct and Disciplinary Action Policy. Breaches may also result in notifications to appropriate authorities and/or the Police.

14   Communication and Implementation

At Board / Principal Level

14.1   This policy is made publicly available on the School's website.

14.2   This policy is available to staff as part of the School's and the Board's internal policies and procedures. Aspects of (and updates to) the School's student safety framework, including this policy will be addressed in the School's professional development updates, training programs, bulletins and newsletters.

14.3   To properly implement this policy:

a)   The Board and Principal will review this policy and the School's student safe practices at least every two years (or more frequently after a significant student safety incident) and implement improvements where applicable.

b)   Families and the School community will be afforded the opportunity to contribute to the review and development of the School's student safety and wellbeing policies and practises (including this policy).

c)   Periodic training and refresher sessions on this policy are provided to all staff.

d)   All staff must ensure that they abide by this policy and assist the School implementing this policy.

Schedule 1: Student Safety and Wellbeing Definitions

1   Introduction

This Schedule sets out the key definitions used in the School's *Student Safety and Wellbeing* policies.

2   Definitions

Behaviour that causes **emotional or psychological harm to a child** includes sexual offences, sexual misconduct, physical violence and significant neglect. However, other types of behaviours can also cause emotional or psychological harm including, for example, severe or sustained instances of verbal abuse; coercive or manipulative behaviour; hostility towards, or rejection of, a child; and humiliation, belittling or scapegoating.

CCYP means Commission for Children and Young People.

Child means a child under the age of 18 years, except in the case of certain mandatory reporting obligations which may define a child to be under a different age.

Child abuse means all forms of child abuse defined in the ETR Act and includes:

• Any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or grooming.

• The infliction on a child, of physical violence or serious emotional or psychological harm.

• Serious neglect of a child.

CWS Act means the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic), as amended from time to time.

CYF Act means the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic), as amended from time to time.

DFFH means the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, which is the department responsible for Child Protection.

ETR Act means the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic), as amended from time to time.

Executive Team refers to the Principal, Deputy Principal, Director of Learning and Teaching, Director of School Operations, Heads of Campus (Eblana, Riviera, Bayview, Greenways and Frogmore), Director of Risk and Compliance, Director of Advancement, Director of People and Culture and the Director of Business.

Grooming is defined in the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) and refers to communication, by words or conduct, between an adult and a child with the intention of facilitating the commission of a sexual offence involving the child. Grooming may be identified by attempts being made at establishing an intimate relationship with, befriending or influencing a child (or, in some circumstances, members of the child's family). In this respect, grooming involves psychological manipulation that is usually very subtle, drawn out, calculated, controlling and premeditated (Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry 2013).

Mandatory reporter has the meaning given to it by section 182 of the CYF Act. It includes but is not limited to registered teachers (including early childhood teachers), staff with post-secondary qualifications employed in the care, education or minding of children, school principals, registered nurses, students in training to become teachers (who have been granted permission to teach under relevant legislation), registered psychologists, out of home care workers, early childhood workers and any other person referred to in section 182 of the CYF Act.

Neglect refers to an individual's failure to meet their obligations and responsibilities to keep a child safe and well, and can include:

- Supervisory neglect, which is the absence or inattention of a staff member which places the child at risk of physical harm or injury, sexual abuse or allows other criminal behaviour to occur.

- Physical neglect, which is the failure to provide basic physical necessities for a child, such as adequate food, clothing, housing or medical attention.

Parent includes a guardian or carer, and 'parents' has a corresponding meaning.

Physical violence includes an act that causes physical injury or pain. Examples of physical violence can include:

- Hitting, kicking and punching.

- Pushing, shoving, grabbing, throwing and shaking.

- Using an object to hit or strike.

- Using inappropriate restraint/excessive force.

Physical violence does not include lawful behaviour. For example:

- Reasonable steps taken to protect a child from immediate harm, such as taking their arm to stop them from going into oncoming traffic.

- Medical treatment given in good faith by an appropriately qualified staff member, such as a senior first aid officer administering first aid.

Threats of physical violence that do not cause physical injury or pain may still amount to behaviour that causes emotional or psychological harm.

Reasonable belief means a belief that would lead a reasonable person in the same position as you, and with the same information as you to form a belief that child abuse (including sexual abuse) or reportable conduct is occurring or may occur. There must be some objective basis for the belief. However, it is not necessary to have proof to form a reasonable belief, nor do you need to make a judgement about the truth of an allegation. However, a reasonable belief is more than suspicion, mere rumour or speculation.

For example, a 'reasonable belief' about a sexual offence might be formed when:

- A student states that they have been sexually abused.

- A student states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (because sometimes the student may be talking about themselves).

- Someone who knows a student states that the student has been sexually abused.

- Professional observations of the student's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the student has been sexually abused.

- Signs of sexual abuse lead to a belief that the student has been sexually abused.

It is permissible to ask a person raising a concern with you, sufficient questions to establish a reasonable belief. However, care should be taken not to ask the person any suggestive or leading questions.

Staff who are not sure whether they have a reasonable belief must consult with a SSO or a member of the Executive Team.

Reportable allegation means any information that leads a person to form a reasonable belief that an employee has committed reportable conduct, or misconduct that may involve reportable conduct, whether or not the conduct or misconduct that is alleged to have occurred was within the course of the person's employment or engagement with the School.

In the above definition, 'employee' has the meaning given in the CWS Act.

Reportable conduct means:

- A sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child.

- Sexual misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence, of a child.

- Physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child.

- Any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.

- Significant neglect of a child.

In the above definition, 'child' has the meaning given in the CWS Act.

School means Mentone Grammar.

School community means all those who are directly and indirectly involved with the School, including students, parents, carers and alumni, as well as businesses, charitable organisations and locals that are affiliated with the School.

Sexual misconduct includes behaviour, physical contact or speech or other communication of a sexual nature (including inappropriate touching, grooming behaviour and voyeurism).

Other examples of sexual misconduct include:

- Developing an intimate relationship with a student, for example, through regular contact with the student without the knowledge or approval of the School;

- Inappropriately discussing sex and sexuality with a student; or

- Other overtly sexual acts that could lead to the School taking disciplinary or other action.

Sexual offence means a sexual offence set out in clause 1 of Schedule 1 to the *Sentencing Act 1991* (Vic), and includes sexual assault (including rape and attempted rape), indecent acts, possession of child abuse material, exposure to pornography, and grooming.

Any sexual activity between a child and an adult can be a sexual offence. In certain circumstances, sexual activity between children can also be a sexual offence, and also between two adults (particularly when one is a student).

Significant, in relation to harm or neglect, means that the harm is more than trivial or insignificant, but need not be as high as serious and need not have a lasting permanent effect.

SOCIT means the Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team.

SSO means a Student Safety Officer.

Staff and **staff members** include Board members, the Principal, employees, volunteers, contractors, labour hire workers, secondees and other authorised personnel required to perform functions on the School's premises, or at school-organised activities and events.

Student means a child under 18 years of age, and any student at the School over 18 years of age, and **'students'** has a corresponding meaning.

Student-connected work means work authorised by the School and performed by an adult in a school environment while children or young people are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Victimisation means treating a person unfairly or unreasonably because they, or someone associated with them, has made, or intends to raise a concern about student safety or student wellbeing, or who is otherwise involved or participates in the School's, or an external body's investigation of the concern.

VIT means the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

VRQA means the Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority.

WSA Act means *Worker Screening Act 2020* (Vic), as amended from time to time.

WWCC means Working with Children Check.

Schedule 2: Student Safety and Wellbeing Responsibilities

1   Introduction

This Schedule is part of the School's student safety and wellbeing framework and sets out how the School allocates responsibility for meeting its public commitment to student safety and wellbeing.

2   Responsibilities

2.1   The Board

The Board is the governing body for the legal entity which operates the School, and as such is ultimately responsible for ensuring that student safety and wellbeing (and in particular the care, safety and welfare of children and young people) is the School's paramount consideration.

Without limiting that responsibility, the Board:

- Acquires guidance and information on student safety and wellbeing matters and keeps up-to-date with its student safety and wellbeing obligations through engaging in professional development.

- Satisfies itself that the School has strategies (reflected through policies, procedures, words and actions) to embed a culture of student safety and wellbeing in the governance, operations and culture of the School, which comply with the Board's obligations under *Ministerial Order No. 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and Boarding Premises*.

- Delegates roles and responsibilities to the Principal, for achieving the School's student safety and wellbeing strategies.

- Satisfies itself that the Principal has allocated appropriate roles and responsibilities to the Executive Team, and to staff, for achieving the School's student safety and wellbeing strategies.

- Satisfies itself that the school community is engaged and informed about the School's student safety and wellbeing strategies, and allocation of roles and responsibilities.

- Ensures that the School, and in particular the Principal, has adequate resources and support to achieve the School's student safety and wellbeing strategies.

- Keeps the Principal and, via the Principal keeps, all staff accountable for achieving the School's student safety and wellbeing strategies, sharing relevant information and ensuring adequate recordkeeping in accordance with the Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards.

- Periodically reviews the effectiveness of the School's student safety and wellbeing strategies in practice (including by, if considered appropriate, revising those strategies).

- Ensures that student safety and wellbeing remains a regular Board agenda item for review, reflection and discussion as well as ensuring that the School reports on the outcomes of any relevant review to the school community.

- Ensures that privacy and employment law obligations are met when responding to student concerns and complaints.

2.1 **The Principal**

In accordance with good governance, the Board delegates responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the School – and in particular the care, safety, wellbeing and welfare of students – to the Principal.

The Principal is therefore responsible at a day-to-day level, and accountable to the Board, for taking all practical measures to ensure that:

- The School has a student safety and cultural safety culture (including in the online environment), and that this is promoted within the school environment – such as at assemblies and on posters in visible locations.

- The School's student safety and wellbeing strategies are achieved, both in policy and in practice.

- The School's student safety and wellbeing policies are communicated to parents, students and families, and that input is sought from them regarding policy development and review, and that the processes contained within are understood and culturally safe.

- Staff are enabled, prepared and supported when managing student safety and wellbeing complaints, including in their support of the student(s) involved (and, where appropriate, their families).

- Staff are educated, and complying with, their professional and statutory responsibilities regarding student safety and wellbeing.

- Staff are enabled, prepared and supported in identifying the risks to student safety and wellbeing, noting that indicators of harm may vary depending on the differences and needs of the student.

- Staff are enabled, prepared and supported to create, maintain and dispose of records about student safety and wellbeing in line with the Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards.

- Staff champion and model compliance with safety and wellbeing policies and procedures.

- Concerns about student safety and wellbeing are dealt with seriously, promptly and thoroughly, and in accordance with the School's policies and procedures, and any statutory obligations and that the School co-operate with law enforcement agencies and relevant authorities as required.

- The Board receives timely reports regarding student safety and wellbeing concerns and risks, or any developments regarding the School's student safety and wellbeing obligations.

2.2 **The Executive Team**

The School's Executive Team is committed to 'leading from the front' and engaging in a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to student safety and wellbeing issues.

Where appropriate, the Executive Team will assist the Principal with discharging the student safety and wellbeing responsibilities outlined in this document, and as otherwise required by legislation and good practice.

2.3   Student Safety Officers

Key responsibilities for the School's SSOs include:

- Having a good working knowledge and appreciation of the School's student safety and wellbeing framework.

- Without replacing any legal reporting obligations any person may have, supporting the Principal in promptly managing the School's response to an allegation of actual or suspected child abuse or reportable conduct, and ensuring that the allegation is taken seriously and responded to appropriately and thoroughly.

- Ensuring the School's student safety and wellbeing strategies are clearly and regularly communicated to staff, students and other members of the school community.

- Ensuring the School's student safety and wellbeing strategies are being implemented effectively and are strengthened where required.

- Ensuring a strong and sustainable student safety and wellbeing culture is embedded within the School.

2.4   Staff

All staff are required to comply with the School's student safety and wellbeing framework (including in particular this policy, *Student Safety and Wellbeing Policy*), as well as their legal and professional obligations with respect to the prevention and reporting of actual or suspected child abuse and reportable conduct.

It is each such staff member's individual responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse or reportable conduct, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have with one of the Principal, the Executive Team, the School's SSOs (and/or with external agencies, where required). In this regard, staff are encouraged to voice their concerns, no matter how minor, trivial or insignificant.

All contractors, labour hire workers, secondees and volunteers involved in student-connected work are required to adhere to this policy and the *Staff Code of Conduct* and are responsible for contributing to the safety and wellbeing of students in the school environment. They too have obligations with respect to the reporting of actual or suspected child abuse or reportable conduct.

Again, it is the School's expectation that contractors, labour hire workers, secondees and volunteers are attuned to their individual responsibilities and act in accordance with their internal and external reporting obligations, and the School's policies and procedures.