Child Safe Policy

2016 June

Introduction

Lauriston Girls’ School is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children and young people. We have zero tolerance for child abuse.

Everyone working at Lauriston Girls’ School is responsible for the care and protection of children and young people and is committed to reporting any incidence of child abuse or concern about possible child abuse.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within Lauriston Girls’ School;
- foster and embed at Lauriston Girls’ School a culture of child safety;
- prevent child abuse within Lauriston Girls’ School;
- ensure that all members of the school community are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse;
- provide a Code of Conduct and guidance to staff/volunteers/contractors to prevent child abuse at Lauriston Girls’ School;
- provide assurance to all stakeholders that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

Policy

Lauriston Girls’ School is committed to promoting and protecting at all times the best interests of children and young people involved in its programs.

All children and young people, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background have equal rights to protection from abuse.

Lauriston Girls’ School has zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at Lauriston Girls’ School is responsible for the care and protection of the children and young people within our care and reporting of information about suspected child abuse.

Child protection is a shared responsibility between Lauriston Girls’ School, all employees, contractors, associates and members of the Lauriston School community.
Lauriston Girls’ School supports and respects all children, young people, staff and parents. We are committed to the continual development of inclusive practices. Lauriston Girls’ School is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and young people, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children and young people living with a disability.

**Procedures**

Everyone working at Lauriston Girls’ School is responsible for the care and protection of the children and young people within our care and reporting about suspected child abuse.

**Responsibilities**

The School Council and School Executive of Lauriston Girls’ School have responsibility for the detection and prevention of child abuse. The School Council delegates responsibility to the School Executive of Lauriston Girls’ School for the establishment, implementation and regular evaluation of appropriate and effective internal control systems. In addition, the School Council delegates responsibility to the School Executive for the development, implementation and regular evaluation of appropriate policies and procedures and a Code of Conduct are in place.

**Responsibilities of school leaders:**

- Provide a safe school environment for the protection of children and young people
- Ensure school personnel understand the definitions of child abuse and neglect and carry out their legal obligations, responsibilities and correct procedures when reporting child abuse and neglect
- Support school personnel directly involved with the handling of disclosure and notification
- Implement policies and organisational procedures which provide children and young people with a safe school environment. This will be done in consultation with the School Council and parent community
- Promote models of behaviour between school personnel and children and young people based on mutual respect and consideration
- Ensure that student management practices respect the dignity of children and young people
- Provide training and development opportunities for school personnel to develop curriculum in the care, wellbeing and protection of children and young people
- Initiate and support the implementation of child protection and abuse prevention curriculum at the classroom level so that children and young people have access to these programs throughout their school years
- Monitor and evaluate child protection and abuse prevention curriculum
- Provide families with information about the protection and abuse prevention curriculum
- Ensure appropriate confidentiality of information concerning children and young people in cases of suspected abuse or neglect

Responsibilities of school personnel (including paid and unpaid volunteers):

- Treat children and young people with dignity and respect, to act with propriety, provide a duty of care and protect children and young people in their care
- Notify the Principal or her/his delegate if in the course of their work, they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child or young person has been or is being abused or neglected
- Provide a physically and psychologically safe environment where the wellbeing of children and young people is nurtured
- Undertake regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities and those of the School, in relation to child protection and the health and wellbeing of children and young people
- Teach children and young people skills and assist them to develop an understanding which will empower them to achieve and maintain personal safety and wellbeing and to ensure they are aware of ways in which they can raise concerns of abuse and receive support within the School.
- Assist children and young people to develop positive, responsible and caring attitudes and behaviours which recognise the rights of all people to be safe and free from harassment and abuse

Definitions

**Child** means a person who is under the age of 18.

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

**Child abuse** includes-

a) Any act committed against a child involving-
   i. A sexual offence; or
   ii. An offence under section 49B (2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming); and
b) The infliction, on a child, or-
   i. Physical violence; or
ii. Serious emotional or psychological harm; and
   c) Serious neglect of a child.

**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.

**Aboriginal child** means a person under the age of 18 who:
- Is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent;
- Identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander; and
- Is accepted as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community.

**Children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds** means a child or young person who identifies as having particular cultural or linguistic affiliations by virtue of their place of birth, ancestry or ethnic origin, religion, preferred language or language spoken and have because of their parents identified on a similar basis.

**Children with a disability** means children or young people with a physical, sensory, neurological disability, acquired brain injury or intellectual disability or developmental delay that affects their ability to undertake everyday activities.

**School Environment** means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child or outside school hours including:
- a) Campus of the school;
- b) Online school environments (including email and intranet systems); and
- c) Other locations provided by the school for a child’s use.

**Child safe organisation** in the context of the Child Safe Standards, is one that meets the child safe standards by proactively taking measures to protect children from abuse.

**School governing authority** means:
- a) The proprietor of a school, including a person authorised to act for or on behalf of the proprietor; or
- b) The governing body for a school, as authorised by the proprietor of a school or the ETR Act; or
- c) The principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school, the school governing body, or the ETR Act.

**School Staff** means in a non-government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:
- i. Directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority;
- ii. A volunteer or a contracted service provider.

**Employment of New Personnel:**
Lauriston Girls’ School undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all employees and volunteers which aims to:

- Promote and protect the safety of all children and young people under the care of the school;
- Identify the safest and most suitable people who share Lauriston Girls’ School’s value and commitment to protect children and young people; and
- Prevent a person from working at Lauriston Girls’ School if they pose a risk to children and young people.

Lauriston Girls’ School requires all employees and volunteers to pass through the school’s recruitment and screening processes prior to commencing their engagement with the school.

Persons applying for a role as a teacher with Lauriston Girls’ School must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

Persons applying for a role in a non-teaching capacity with Lauriston Girls’ School must have a valid Working with Children Check.

In accordance with the applicable legal requirement or school policy, Lauriston Girls’ School will make reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about a person whom it proposes to engage to perform child-connected work:

a) Working with Children Check status, or similar check;
b) Proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications;
c) The person’s history of work involving children; and

d) References that address the person’s suitability for the job and working with children.

Lauriston Girls’ School will undertake thorough reference checks as per the approved internal procedure.

Once engaged, employees and volunteers will review and acknowledge their understanding of this Policy.

**Risk Management:**

Lauriston Girls’ School will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach.

Lauriston Girls’ School will have a risk and compliance sub-committee committed to identifying and managing risks at the school. Risk and compliance sub-committee members will receive regular training in relation to child safety.

**Reporting:**

Any staff member, volunteer or contractor must follow the reporting procedures as they are outlined in the Lauriston Girls’ School Child Protection Policy (Mandatory Reporting).

**Investigating:**
If the Department of Human Services (Child Protection Services) or the Police decide to conduct an investigation of a report made, all employees, contractors or volunteers are expected to co-operate fully with the investigation, unless there is some legal reason for them not to do so.

Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, the Principal will consult with the authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate. If it is decided that such an investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the Principal may decide to facilitate such an investigation. All employees, contractors and volunteers are expected to co-operate fully with the investigation.

Some investigations are inherently complex and sensitive in nature, and therefore would be conducted by an appropriately qualified external investigator, while affording those involved natural justice and procedural fairness.

The Principal will make every effort to keep any investigation confidential; however, from time to time other members of staff and/or the school community may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.

Responding:

It if is alleged that a member of staff, contractor or volunteer may have committed an offence or have breached Lauriston Girls’ School policies or its Code of Conduct, the person concerned may be stood down (with pay, where appropriate) while an investigation is conducted.

If the investigation concludes that on the balance of probabilities an offence, or a breach of the school’s policies or Code of Conduct has occurred, then disciplinary action may follow, up to and including dismissal. The findings of the investigation will also be reported to any external body as required. The accused person will be entitled to be represented if and when any internal disciplinary action takes place.

Privacy:

All personal information considered or records will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone’s safety. Lauriston Girls’ School has safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected.

Everyone is entitled to know how the personal information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will be able to access it.

Review of Policy:

Every two years, and following every reportable incident, a review shall be conducted to assess whether the school’s child protection policies and procedures require modification to better protect the children and young people under the school’s care.
Related Documents

- Privacy Policy
- Child Protection Policy (Mandatory Reporting)
- Child Protection Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Respectful Relationships Policy