



Alkira
Secondary College

Personalised learning for all. Respect for the individual learner.

15 Nurture Avenue, Cranbourne North 3977
PO Box 4314, Narre Warren South 3805
Victoria, Australia
Phone: 5991 3500 Fax: 5991 3599
Email: alkira.sc@edumail.vic.gov.au
Website: www.alkirasecondarycollege.com.au

STUDENT VOICE AND EMPOWERMENT POLICY

Rationale:

Children often do not report abuse because they feel uncomfortable or they do not know how to raise their concerns or allegations of abuse. The College will provide processes of communication and specific curriculum to assist children to understand their rights and how to report concerns regarding their safety.

Aims:

Schools need to ensure children feel safe and comfortable in reporting concerns or allegations of abuse; possessing simple and accessible processes that help children understand what to do if they want to report abuse, inappropriate behaviour or concerns for their safety. All school staff and people working in a child connected capacity need to have an awareness of children's rights and adults' responsibilities regarding child abuse.

Implementation:

The school will provide students with the following strategies to facilitate the empowerment of students-

Provision of child-appropriate and accessible information through Pastoral Care curriculum about:

- What child abuse is;
- Student rights to make decisions about their body;
- Privacy,
- Forms of child abuse;
- How they can raise concerns about abuse;
- Student Engagement;
- School wide positive behaviour support;
- Safe Schools Hub for students;
- Respectful relationships education;
- Health education;
- Sexuality education;
- Mental Health;
- Supporting Resilience;
- Child wise personal safety education;
- Standards of behaviour for students attending Alkira SC;
- Healthy and Respectful relationships (including sexuality);
- Resilience;
- Mind Matters;
- Healthy Together Achievement Program;
- Daniel Morcombe Child Safety Curriculum

- Information and processes for reporting concerns are accessible to all children, for example by having policies and procedures that are able to be accessed and understood by children with a disability.

Ensure information and processes for reporting concerns are culturally appropriate for Aboriginal children. As required, the school will engage with parents of Aboriginal children, local Aboriginal communities or an Aboriginal community controlled organisation to review information and processes. Additionally, the Regional Koorie support officer can arrange appropriate support for a student.

- Provide culturally appropriate language, photographs and artwork for Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability when drafting communications materials.
- Empowering students to have a formal voice of what needs to occur at the College from their perspective, with an identified forum and scheduled timeframe (created by the Leadership Team) of when this will occur.
- Translate organisational information (including information about children's rights, child safe policies, statements of commitment and reporting and response procedures) into relevant community languages, as required or upon request.
- Gather strategic feedback from children (for example, through surveys, focus groups, Pastoral Care) about student safety, modes of raising concerns and suggested improvements for the school.
- Enable children to express their views and make suggestions on what child safety means to them, and on child safe policies, reporting and response procedures, and acknowledge and act upon these where possible. (For example, student views could be gathered through Sub-School suggestion boxes, feedback sessions through Pastoral Care sessions or via direct communication with the Child Safety Officer.
- Ensure services are accessible for people with a disability, for example provide appropriate communication aids such as hearing loops through classroom of Alkira's buildings.
- Provide relevant training to all staff of Alkira SC on methods of inclusiveness to encourage the participation of all children, in all activities, through-
 - Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children;
 - Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and / or linguistically diverse backgrounds;
 - Promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability;
 - Promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children living in Out-of-Home Care;
- Ensure Aboriginal children are accepted when identifying as Aboriginal, and that staff and volunteers understand appropriate responses to children identifying as Aboriginal.
- Raise awareness within the College about children's RIGHTS through our Values and Expectations posters.
- Provide a physical environment that is visually inclusive and welcoming for Aboriginal peoples and culture, such as by displaying symbols that indicate support and respect for Aboriginal peoples.
- Promoting a school environment where the past is acknowledged and Aboriginal cultural diversity is respected, such as by including an Acknowledgement of Country at each meeting or event.

Samples adapted from DHHS booklet- An Overview of the Victorian Child Safe Standards and published by Victorian Govt. 2015

Alkira SC acknowledges within our statement of commitment that it is our moral and legal responsibility to create a nurturing school environment where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard

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

Within this context it is vitally important that Alkira staff promote the participation and empowerment of all children. When children have an environment in which they feel safe, respected and comfortable, they are more likely to speak on issues of safety and wellbeing.

All staff of Alkira SC have a responsibility to provide teaching and learning environments that are free from discrimination in all forms, including those based on race, ethnicity, gender, ability, disability, sexuality and religion.

Child protection is a shared responsibility between all employees, workers, contractors, associates, and members of the Alkira SC community. The safety and wellbeing of our students form a central and fundamental responsibility of our College and compliments our vision and values of: Respect, Integrity, Care and Excellence.

We are committed to Zero tolerance of child abuse; including physical violence, sexual offences, serious emotional or psychological abuse and serious neglect. It is our moral and legal responsibility to create a nurturing school environment where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard and they are safe and feel safe. All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse. Alkira SC affirms our commitment towards-

- The support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
- Actively working towards listening to and empowering children.
- Creating systems to protect children from abuse and will take all allegations and concerns seriously; having mechanisms in place to ensure consistency in line with school, DET and DHS protocols.
- Promoting cultural safety and safe learning environments for Aboriginal children, the disabled and children from culturally / linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Empowering and providing an inclusive environment for Aboriginal children, the disabled and children from culturally / linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed as part of the College's three-year review cycle.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in **September 2016**