



STUDENT WELFARE POLICY

Rationale:

This College endeavours to promote a healthy, supportive and secure environment for all children and to raise awareness of what makes students resilient, to develop strategies to reduce vulnerabilities, to build student/College connectedness, and to increase coping skills.

Aims:

The College is a positive environment in which all teachers assume responsibility for student welfare, endeavouring to provide successful experiences for all children, where children feel safe and secure in a supportive environment where a sense of belonging and wellbeing are strengthened.

- Children develop positive social behaviours, problem solving and conflict resolution skills.
- Staff are confident, skilled and proactive in the management of student welfare issues.
- Communication processes and protocols are clear and well known to ensure the effectiveness of student welfare support
- To ensure that appropriate privacy measures are in place

Implementation:

- Student Welfare is a shared responsibility between school, home and the community.
- The College will appoint a staff member who will coordinate student welfare across the College.
- The College will adopt a proactive and strategic stance with issues of student welfare.
- The College will implement welfare support structures and programs which prioritise and address the identified needs of individual students or the College as a whole.
- The College will access Student Support Services and other appropriate services to advise and assist in supporting students with specific welfare needs.
- The College will endeavour to implement and maintain a range of programs to support student welfare such as:
 - Peer Support
 - Student Awards
 - Drug Education
 - Committing to a whole College approaches to support wellbeing, such as *Mind Matters* and *SAFE Minds*
 - Transition programs

- The College will provide the following support structures:
 - Pastoral Care
 - Monitoring of, and responding to, protracted student absences
 - Trauma Management plan
 - Protocol for Mandatory Reporting
 - Student Support Groups for children in need
 - Bullying Survey of students and College environment.

- The College will also access and/or liaise with appropriate external services to provide support for students and staff including:
 - Student Support Service Officers (SSSO)
 - Visiting Teacher Service
 - DHHS case managers and support workers
 - Casey Youth Services
 - Out of Home Care agencies e.g. OzChild, Wesley Mission, Berry Street
 - Community agencies e.g.: Windermere, Connections
 - S.E.C.A.S.A. [South East Centre Against Sexual Assault]
 - ELMHS [Early in Life Mental Health Service]

- The College will continue to create affiliations with appropriate bodies to ensure teachers have access to a range of resources to support student welfare, such as:
 - White Ribbon
 - Reach out
 - Headspace
 - Beyond Blue
 - Adolescent Recovery Centre (ARC)
 - AIME
 - Safe Schools Coalition

- The school will endeavour to cater for:

Children with identified specific welfare issues by creating support groups, developing appropriate individual programs including goals, monitoring performance and behaviour, and providing ongoing support.

- The school will cater for the **Child Safety Standards** through its welfare programs, College protocols and curriculum via the following:
 - A Child Safety Officer (Wellbeing Coordinator) will be appointed as contact for others who have questions or concerns or want to report an allegation of child abuse.
 - 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.
 - Empower students to have a formal voice of what needs to occur at the College from their perspective, with an identified forum and scheduled timeframe of when this will occur.
 - Continually building upon the opportunities and avenues for participation and empowerment of all children within the College.
 - Celebrating diversity and continually developing Alkira's capacity to be a culturally and linguistically safe community, where respect and equality is enhanced in all things we do.

- Liaising with student groups within the College to establish standards of care, their rights, how to raise concerns, consulting mechanisms and the various manners that they can have a voice in this area as student leaders / student mentors. Creating strategies and processes for this occur.
- Alkira SC will create processes and protocols to make students aware of child safety / child abuse and their need to report matters of child abuse to authorities.
- Child safe information and curriculum will be developed and shared through Pastoral Care sessions.
- Alkira SC will provide support for children impacted by abuse; including the development of a Student Support Plan in consultation with wellbeing professionals. Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to internal and external wellbeing professionals etc.
- Children will be made aware on how to report inappropriate behaviour.
- The school will create clearly understood and widely publicised child safety reporting procedures.

Mandatory Reporting

All VIT registered teachers and Principals, staff who have been granted permission by VIT to teach, registered doctors and nurses are all classified as 'Mandatory Reporters'. This classification obligates these people to make a report to Victoria Police and / or DHHS Child Protection as soon as practicable if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that:

A child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical or sexual abuse

and

The child's parents have not protected or are unlikely to protect the child from harm or that type

Alkira SC will record any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Code of Conduct (and subsequent action) and store these to DET and Alkira SC security and privacy conventions. To make processes, understandings and obligations clear, our College has appointed a dedicated 'Child-Safety' Officer. Staff should liaise with her on all child safety areas.

The following information has been taken from DET's **PROTECT** documents- *Identifying and Responding to ALL Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools* and linked website www.education.vic.gov.au/protect

Forming a Suspicion

All staff suspicions that a child has been or may be in danger of being abused must be taken seriously. Alkira SC staff should liaise with our Child Safety Officer, who will advise on the specific incident.

Receiving a Disclosure (current student / former student)

If a child discloses that they have been, are being, or are in danger of being abused, Alkira SC staff must treat the disclosure seriously and take immediate action by following the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse. If a former student discloses historical abuse, all staff **must** act. If the former student is currently of school age and attending a Victorian school, staff must follow the Four Critical Actions for Schools. If the student is no longer of school age or attending a Victorian school, staff must still act by contacting Victoria Police.

Forming a Reasonable Belief

If Alkira SC staff witness behaviour, have a suspicion or receive a disclosure of child abuse, that staff member needs to determine whether they have formed a Reasonable Belief that a child is being abused or is at risk of being abused. A reasonable belief does not require proof (but needs to be more than a rumour).

Six different identified types of abuse

All staff who believe that a child is being abused by any type of abuse or at risk of being abused must follow the Four Critical Actions for Schools. Detailed information on each area (and physical / behavioural indicators) can be gained from DETs website- www.education.vic.gov.au/protect

- 1: Physical
- 2: Sexual
- 3: Grooming
- 4: Emotional
- 5: Neglect
- 6: Family Violence

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**