Avalon College

CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY

1. Purpose

Avalon College is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This policy outlines Avalon College's approach to meeting its child safety obligations under **Ministerial Order No. 1359**, the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* and related Victorian legislation. This policy is tailored to Avalon Boarding Pty Ltd, the sole provider of residential accommodation for students enrolled at Avalon College.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Avalon College and Avalon Boarding staff, contractors, volunteers, students, parents/guardians and third-party providers involved in the care or education of Avalon College students.

3. Policy Statement

Avalon College:

- Has zero tolerance for child abuse or harm.
- Prioritises the cultural safety of Aboriginal students and students from diverse backgrounds.
- Promotes child empowerment and participation.
- Ensures that children with disabilities are provided equal protection.

4. Leadership and Governance

The Managing Director of Avalon College is the Principal Executive Officer (PEO) and is designated as the Head of Organisation under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Leadership roles are responsible for embedding child safety across the College and Boarding premises. Responsibilities include:

- Implementing the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct.
- Conducting regular risk assessments to identify and mitigate child abuse risks.
- Maintaining a culture of continuous improvement in child safety.

5. Child Safety Risk Management

The College maintains a **Child Safety Risk Register (AC-HS-001)**, which:

- Identifies risks of child abuse in both physical and online environments.
- Outlines mitigation strategies and monitoring processes.
- Is reviewed annually and following any incidents.

Staff and volunteers are expected to:

- Respect each child's right to privacy.
- Avoid unnecessary restrictions on access to learning or social opportunities.
- Promote inclusion and participation while ensuring safety.

Examples include:

- Adjusting boarding supervision to support healthy peer relationships.
- Applying internet safety controls that allow safe academic and social access.
- Monitoring wellbeing concerns confidentially and respectfully.

6. Empowering Students

Avalon College empowers students through:

- Orientation and class sessions teaching protective behaviours.
- A student-friendly version of this policy.
- Programs promoting student voice, peer support and respectful relationships.

7. Culturally Safe Environments

Avalon College supports cultural expression and values diversity. Strategies include:

- A **Cultural Safety & Inclusion Policy (AC-WEL-005)**.
- Staff training on Aboriginal cultural safety.
- Visible inclusion in student spaces and curriculum content.

8. Recruitment and Human Resources

Avalon College ensures rigorous screening processes, including:

- **Recruitment & Suitability Policy (AC-HR-001)** requirements: WWCC/VIT checks, referee checks and child safety-focused interviews.
- Mandatory signing of the Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- Child safety induction and ongoing training.

9. Child Safety Reporting Obligations

All staff must report:

- Any reasonable belief of child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect).
- Immediately to the PEO – Managing Director or the Child Safety Officer.
- To Victoria Police or DFFH, as legally required.

Legal Obligations:

Mandatory Reporting (CYFA 2005): Applies to professionals legally obligated to report child abuse.

Crimes Act 1958 (Vic):

- **Failure to Disclose** – Must report known sexual offences against a child under 16.
- **Grooming Offence** – It is illegal to facilitate a child's involvement in sexual conduct.
- **Failure to Protect** – Those in authority must act on substantial risks of child sexual abuse.

Additional Responsibilities:

- Each instance of suspected abuse must be reported, regardless of past reports.
- All reports must be made without delay.
- Staff must report independently if required.

Refer to **Complaints & Grievances Policy (AC-GOV-003)** for detailed procedures.

10. Reportable Conduct Scheme

The PEO is responsible for:

- Notifying **the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP**) of reportable conduct.
- Investigating allegations.
- Contacting Victoria Police when criminal conduct is suspected.

11. Information Sharing and Recordkeeping

Avalon College manages records in line with Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) standards.

- Records of child sexual abuse allegations are retained as long as legally required.
- Records are securely stored and access is limited to authorised personnel.
- Staff receive training on recordkeeping obligations during induction and annually.

12. Communication and Accessibility

- This policy is available in multiple languages.
- Key messages are shared at orientation and throughout the year.
- Regular updates are communicated to the school community.

13. Inclusive Child Safety Strategy

Avalon College acknowledges the increased risks some children face due to:

- Cultural background
- Disability
- Language barriers
- Sexual orientation or gender identity
- Separation from family

Strategies include:

- Considering these factors in all risk assessments.
- Making reasonable adjustments to ensure full participation in safety education.
- Training staff on intersectional risks.
- Reviewing practices to ensure all students feel safe and included.

14. Student Empowerment & Child-Friendly Reporting

Staff and volunteers are trained to identify harm and respond to disclosures.

Students are supported through:

- Orientation sessions and wellbeing curriculum.
- Leadership roles and student committees.
- Anonymous reporting mechanisms (e.g. suggestion boxes, Orah "Wellbeing" tags).
- Clearly displayed contacts for Child Safety Officers and Boarding Staff.
- Regular opportunities to provide input into school policies and activities.

15. Student Participation and Voice

Student participation is embedded through:

- **Boarding House Student Leaders** meeting regularly with leadership.
- Student feedback forums during assemblies and wellbeing sessions.
- Surveys (First Week, Exit) and suggestion boxes.
- Staff training to foster and respond to student voice.
- Feedback loops to ensure student suggestions lead to visible outcomes.

16. Student Engagement in Decision-Making

Students influence decision-making through:

- Student Leadership roles and peer mentoring.
- Input into the Wellbeing Program and extracurricular design.
- Co-design of cultural events and boarding projects.
- Formal communication of actions taken from student feedback.

17. Sexual Abuse Prevention and Education

Programs within the Wellbeing Curriculum include:

- **Ages 10–13**: Protective behaviours, body safety, trusted adults.
- **Ages 14–17**: Respectful relationships, consent, online safety, grooming awareness.

Resources include:

- Daniel Morcombe Foundation's *Recognise, React, Report*.
- Victorian *Respectful Relationships* curriculum.
- eSafety Commissioner modules.

Annual reviews ensure content remains current and appropriate.

18. Reporting Outcomes to the College Community

Avalon College commits to transparency by:

- Sharing outcomes of audits, policy updates and incidents with:
    - Staff (via meetings and training)
    - Families (via email and sessions)
    - Students (via age-appropriate sessions)
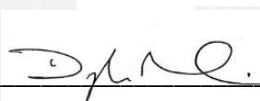
19. Continuous Improvement

Avalon College commits to:

- Annual policy review.
- Ongoing reflective practice and feedback collection.
- Staying aligned with evolving child safety legislation and best practices.

For further guidance, contact the Child Safety Officer or refer to the Avalon College Complaints & Grievances Policy (AC-GOV-003).

Approved by: Avalon College Managing Director

Signature: _____

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