

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 sets out Avalon College's approach to meeting its child safety obligations under **Ministerial Order 1359, the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005**, and related Victorian legislation, tailored to Avalon Boarding Pty Ltd as 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 with the care or education of Avalon 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 children with disabilities are provided equal protection.

4. Leadership and Governance

The Managing Director of Avalon College is the Principal Executive Officer (PEO) and the head of organisation under the Reportable Conduct Scheme. Leadership roles ensure child safety is embedded across the College and the Boarding premises. This includes:

- Implementing the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct.

- Conducting risk assessments that 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)** that:

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

6. Empowering Students

Avalon College actively empowers students through:

- Orientation and class sessions that teach protective behaviours and personal safety.
- A student-friendly version of this policy.
- Programs that promote student voice, peer support, and respectful relationships.

7. Culturally Safe Environments

Avalon College supports students to express their culture and values diversity. Strategies include:

- A **Cultural Safety & Inclusion Policy (AC-WEL-005)**
- Training for staff on Aboriginal cultural safety.
- Visible signs of cultural inclusion in student spaces and curriculum content.

8. Recruitment and Human Resources

The College applies rigorous screening processes:

- **Recruitment & Suitability Policy (AC-HR-001)** includes WWCC/VIT checks, referee checks, and interview questions about child safety.
- All staff must sign the Child Safety Code of Conduct prior to commencing.
- Induction includes mandatory child safety training.

9. Child Safety Reporting Obligations

Staff must report:

- **Any reasonable belief** of child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional or neglect)
- To the **PEO - Managing Director** or **Child Safety Officer** immediately
- To **Victoria Police** or **DFFH** as required by law

Mandatory reporters must comply with their obligations under the **Children, Youth and Families Act 2005**. Obligations under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic):

Failure to Disclose: A person aged 18 or over who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child under the age of 16 by another person aged 18 or over must report that information to Victoria Police as soon as practicable, unless they have a reasonable excuse for not doing so.

- Reasonable belief means that a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief based on the information available.
- Reasonable excuse includes fear for safety or the belief that the information has already been reported.

Grooming Offence: An adult who communicates, by words or conduct, with a child under the age of 16 years—or with someone who has care, supervision or authority over the child—with the intention of facilitating the child’s involvement in sexual conduct (with themselves or another adult) is committing an offence under the Crimes Act.

Failure to Protect: A person in a position of authority within Avalon College who knows there is a substantial risk that another adult associated with the College will commit a sexual offence against a child under the age of 16 must take reasonable steps to reduce or remove that risk. This includes identifying whether a substantial risk exists and not negligently failing to act.

Additional Responsibilities:

- Staff must report each instance of suspected abuse, even if they have reported before.
- All reports must be made promptly. Delay may risk the child's safety and place the reporter in breach of legal obligations.
- Staff must act independently to report, regardless of whether the PEO or another staff member agrees.

All such behaviours or suspicions must be reported immediately and handled in accordance with this policy and the law.

For detailed procedures on how Avalon College responds to complaints and concerns related to child abuse or misconduct, please refer to the **Avalon College Complaints & Grievances Policy (AC-GOV-003)**. That policy outlines the process for raising concerns, reporting obligations, immediate protective actions, and the responsibilities of Avalon College staff and leadership to respond to and manage child safety matters.

10. Reportable Conduct Scheme

The PEO is responsible for:

- Notifying the Commission for Children and Young People of allegations
- Investigating allegations of reportable conduct
- Ensuring Victoria Police is contacted if criminal conduct is suspected

11. Information Sharing and Recordkeeping

The College adheres to the **Public Record Office Victoria** recordkeeping standards:

- All records related to child safety are securely stored and kept for at least 7 years
- Staff understand their obligations for privacy, sharing, and retention of child safety-related records

12. Communication and Accessibility

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Next Review Date: 27 March 2026

Approved by: Avalon College Managing Director

- This policy is available in multiple languages.
- Key points are communicated to students and families at orientation.
- Regular updates are shared with the College community.

13. Inclusive Child Safety Strategy

Avalon College recognises that children may experience heightened risk due to intersecting factors such as cultural background, disability, language barriers, sexual orientation, gender identity, or separation from family. In line with **Ministerial Order No. 1359** clauses 9.1 and 9.2, the College commits to:

- Considering diversity, vulnerability, and lived experience in all risk assessments, especially when updating the **Child Safety Risk Register (AC-RSK-001)**
- Ensuring that responses to safety concerns reflect a student's individual needs and background
- Making reasonable adjustments to ensure full participation in safety education programs for students with disability or additional needs
- Providing staff and volunteer training that highlights the importance of responding with sensitivity to intersectional risks
- Continuously reviewing practices to ensure all students feel safe, included, and understood in both school and boarding environments

14. Reporting Outcomes to the Avalon College Community

Avalon College is committed to transparency and continuous improvement in its approach to child safety and wellbeing. The outcomes of formal reviews, audits, policy updates, or responses to significant child safety incidents will be communicated to relevant members of the Avalon College community, including:

- **Staff and Volunteers** – through annual training updates, staff meetings, and policy briefings.
- **Families and Guardians** – through email notices and family engagement sessions.
- **Students** – through age-appropriate communication during assemblies, homeroom sessions, or boarding house meetings.

These communications will ensure that the entire school community remains informed of how Avalon College continues to uphold its child safety obligations and respond to risks and incidents in a transparent and inclusive manner.

15. Continuous Improvement

Avalon College commits to:

- Annual review of this policy
- Reflective practice and feedback loops
- Keeping up to date with evolving child safety legislation and guidance