

Child Safe Standard 2: Child Safety Policy



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the Principal, Stewart Milner.

CONTEXT

The Centre for Higher Education Studies (CHES) is a co-educational, specific purpose, senior secondary school where high-achieving and high-ability (HA) students can extend their learning. CHES offers face to face learning at a state-of-the-art facility in South Yarra and hosts a high-quality virtual platform to enable students to access programs at CHES regardless of where they are located.

Students engage with CHES programs in the following ways:

- direct enrolment of students into select VCE subjects onsite and virtually, including access to Student Enrichment Programs - providing mentoring, workshops, and seminars
- direct enrolment of Higher Education Studies (HES) delivered by partner Universities, including access to Student Enrichment Programs - providing mentoring, workshops, and seminars

Students participating in CHES programs remain enrolled at their chosen secondary school (base school) and are supported to undertake a course at CHES as part of their VCE program. Working in close partnership with students' base schools, students will be enrolled in a CHES course for a fraction of their timetable (generally 20 per cent), with the remainder of their enrolment and timetable reflecting the subjects being completed at their base school.

CHES shares a joint responsibility with students' base schools to ensure students' social and emotional wellbeing, and also partners with Universities and base schools to ensure students' academic needs are met.

Individual student study arrangements are considered and agreed between the student, parent/carers, base school, and CHES upon enrolment and induction. To formalise individual student study arrangements CHES develop an Individualised Achievement Plan (IAP) which will include:

- study arrangements (CHES program and delivery mode - face to face, virtual, or combination)
- timetable requirements
- travel arrangements (if applicable)
- agreed communication methods between base-school and CHES (who, what, when and how)
- agreed communication methods between partner Universities and CHES (who, what, when and how)
- reasonable adjustments (if required)
- student health care needs including asthma management, administration of medication and individual anaphylaxis management.

All CHES policies are designed to reflect its unique operating environment (physical and virtual), its program offerings, its partnerships with universities and shared responsibility with students' base schools to ensure students' social and emotional wellbeing and academic needs are met.

PURPOSE

The CHES Child Safety Policy sets out the school's commitment and approach to creating and maintaining a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff, university partners and representatives, volunteers, and contractors in the school environment, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people. This policy also applies to school council members where indicated.

The policy will apply to the school environment (see Definitions section). The policy covers both school hours and outside of school hours.

DEFINITIONS

Child abuse

Child abuse includes:

- any act committed against a child involving:
 - a sexual offence; or
 - grooming; and
- the infliction, on a child, of:
 - physical violence; or
 - serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- serious neglect of a child.

Child-connected work

Child-connected work means work authorised by the school, school council, or Secretary of the Department of Education and Training and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child safety

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.

School environment

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- the Centre for Higher Education Studies (CHES) premises;
- partner universities;
- online school environments (including email, intranet systems, Learning Management Systems, Virtual Environments and social media); and

- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, homestays, and other school activities or events).

School staff

School staff means an individual working in a school environment who is:

- employed by the Department of Education and Training;
- directly engaged or employed by a school council; or
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary).

In addition to CHES staff, the staff from partner universities who deliver the Higher Education Studies programs are included in this Child Safety Policy.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY AND CHILD SAFETY PRINCIPLES

CHES is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

The CHES approach to creating and maintaining a child safe school environment is guided by our school philosophy and values. At CHES, our Statement of Values and School Philosophy is integral to the work that we do and is the foundation of our school community. Students, staff and members of our school community are encouraged to live and demonstrate our core values of **Reach, Connection, Understanding** at every opportunity.

At CHES our values guide the decisions and behaviours of all members of our school community, including in relation to child safety. The essence of CHES is that 'We are Forward Thinking'.

WE REACH. We're here to extend our learning. To challenge and transcend traditional ways of thinking. We want to scale greater heights of academic study.

WE CONNECT. Student to student, teacher to student, school to university, this is where we connect and collaborate, sparking new ideas and building on our potential. Together.

WE UNDERSTAND. We are part of a community that is supportive, open and kind. Our centre is where skills, knowledge, and inspiring academic journeys are shared.

WE ARE FORWARD THINKING. Our focus is on the future, with an open mind, and a pursuit of learning that is active and shared.

At CHES, we have zero tolerance for child abuse.

We are committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, procedures, strategies and practices will be inclusive of the needs of all students, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with disabilities, students who are vulnerable, students in out of home care, and LGBTIQA+ students.

Every person involved in CHES has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

CHILD SAFETY PRINCIPLES

In its planning, decision-making and operations, CHES will:

1. take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety
2. value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives
3. foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children
4. respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount
5. provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children
6. engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development
7. ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such concerns
8. report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities
9. share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk
10. value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

POLICY

Strategies to Embed a Child Safe Culture

The culture of CHES encourages staff, students, parents and the school community to raise, discuss and scrutinise child safety concerns. This makes it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

All child safety documents, including this policy, the Child Safety Code of Conduct, the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#) and the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) are readily available online and in hard copy at the school's office for all staff and students to read at any time.

Child safety is everyone's responsibility. **All CHES staff** are required to:

- act in accordance with the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct, which clearly sets out the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour
- act in accordance with the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures at all times, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) where necessary
- undertake annual guidance and training on child safety
- act in accordance with their legal obligations, including:
 - failure to disclose offence (applies to all adults)
 - duty of care (applies to all school staff)
 - mandatory reporting obligations (applies to all mandatory reporters, including teachers, university staff who have VIT permission-to-teach status, principals, registered psychologists, registered doctors and nurses, and school staff who provide direct support to students for mental, emotional or psychological wellbeing i.e. counsellors)
 - failure to protect offence (applies to a person in a position of authority within the school)
 - reportable conduct obligations (applies to all school staff in reporting conduct to the principal, and applies to the principal in reporting to Employee Conduct Branch)
 - organisational duty of care (applies to the school as an organisation)
 - for more information on these obligations, see [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#).

As part of the child safe culture of CHES, **school leadership** (including the principal) will:

- consider the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, children who are vulnerable, students in out of home care, and LGBTIQ+ students when implementing the Child Safe Standards
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings and staff meetings
- encourage and enable staff professional learning and training to build deeper understandings of child safety and prevention of abuse
- ensure that no one is prohibited or discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to a person external to the school or from making records of any allegation.
- provide annual training to university partners on the CHES child safety expectations, policies and code of conduct.

As part of the child safe culture of CHES, CHES staff are required to:

- complete the [Protecting Children – Mandatory reporting and other obligations](#) online module every year
- read the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document
- read the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document
- read the school's Child Safety Policy (this document) on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document.

As part of the child safe culture of CHES, in performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, **school councils and school council members** will:

- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings
- consider the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, children who are vulnerable, students in out of home care, and LGBTIQ+ students when making decisions regarding the Child Safe Standards
- undertake annual guidance and training on child safety, such as the [Child Safe Standards School Council Training PowerPoint](#).
- approve the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members, and if updated, note the new document in its school council meeting minutes
- when hiring employees, ensure that selection, supervision and management practices are child safe (unless delegated to the principal).

School leadership will maintain records of the above processes.

Roles and responsibilities

School leaders will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct, which sets out clearly the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, and this includes staff at university partners who are delivering programs for CHES students

Specific child safety responsibilities:

- The Principal is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy every three years.
- The Principal is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy. The school community should approach the principal if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy.
- The Principal is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available.
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in CHES's other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and risk assessment register.

Recruitment

The Principal of CHES will use the Department's [Recruitment in Schools Policy and Guidelines](#) and Recruitment Online process to ensure that selection, supervision and management practices are child safe, including ensuring that:

- jobs involving child-connected work have a statement setting out the job's requirements and duties regarding child safety
- our school's Child Safety Code of Conduct is available on our website
- the selection criteria specify the relevant skills, personal qualities and abilities required for the efficient performance of a particular position in relation to child support and safety
- incorporating Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct in the Memorandum of Understanding with each partner university

CHES will be guided by the Department's Recruitment in Schools guidelines regarding the recruitment and pre-employment check processes to ensure that relevant proof of personal identity, valid Working with Children Clearance or other suitable check (such as registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching), and all other professional qualifications are ascertained to meet the child safe standards, as follows:

- inform applicants for jobs involving child-connected work about the school's child safety practices (including the Code of Conduct)
- the interview complements the written application and detailed referee checks to validate an applicant's work history and experience. Referees nominated by the applicant will be called on to clarify, verify and add information about an applicant's history of work involving children. Pre-employment suitability checks are also conducted in accordance with the Department's Recruitment in School Policy and Guidelines
- in addition to referee checks, pre-employment suitability checks are conducted following the recruitment decision process – see [Employment, Promotion and Transfer](#)
- volunteers will be engaged in accordance with our Volunteers Policy
- university staff who are teaching Higher Education Studies have permission to teach from the VIT
- university representatives working with students in other capacities, such as mentoring, are required to hold a WWCC referee checks must be undertaken to confirm suitability to work with children.

Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in the school understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our school culture aims for all CHES staff, partner university staff delivering HES programs, and volunteers including mentors (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in coming forward with any allegations or suspicions of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff, partner

university staff who are delivering Higher Education Studies, and volunteers (including university mentors) to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse. This training occurs annually or more often as required.

We also support our staff, partner university staff, and volunteers (including university mentors) through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse, to promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability and vulnerable children.

New employees and volunteers, including university mentors, will be inducted into the CHES child safety culture, expectations and procedures, including by being referred to the Child Safety Policy (this document), the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures on the school website. All employees of our school will be monitored and assessed via regular performance review to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported by school staff to the Principal and will be managed in accordance with CHES's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures where required. The annual induction for university staff who deliver programs for CHES students incorporates child safety obligations. The partnership agreements between CHES and partner universities includes the expectation that universities must declare incidents, allegations and reasonable suspicions as soon as they become aware of them.

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

The school has clear expectations for all CHES staff, university staff delivering Higher Education Studies through CHES, and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. All staff (including school council employees) must follow the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) if there is an incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse. Immediate actions should include reporting their concerns to Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Child Protection, Victoria Police and/or another appropriate agency and notifying the principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns.

CHES will never prohibit or discourage school staff or university partner staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse. The school will always take action to respond to a complaint in accordance with the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures. In accordance with Action 4 of the Four Critical Actions for Schools, CHES will provide ongoing support for students affected by child abuse.

The Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures can be found at [Protecting Children — Reporting and Other Legal Obligations: Policy | education.vic.gov.au](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/protecting-children/reporting-and-other-legal-obligations/policy)

Risk reduction and management

CHES believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes, found in the school's risk assessment register. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.

We will identify and mitigate the risks of child abuse in school environments by taking into account the nature of each school environment, the activities expected to be conducted in that environment and the characteristics and needs of all children expected to be present in that environment.

CHES monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the actions it takes to reduce or remove risks to child safety, more information can be found in the school's risk assessment register.

Listening to, communicating with and empowering children

CHES has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/carers. We encourage child and parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/carers to understand their rights and their responsibilities. Our school is committed to supporting and encouraging students to use their voice to raise and share their concerns with a trusted adult at any time of need. Students can access information on how to report abuse at the office.

When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct with or abuse of a child, the school will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (and/or their parents/carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

The school will promote the Child Safe Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children, including:

- all of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for the students and parents at CHES to read at the office
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school
- newsletters will inform students and the CHES community about the school's commitment to child safety, and strategies or initiatives that the school is taking to ensure student safety
- age-appropriate discussion of child safety with students
- the Four Critical Actions are actively taught to mandatory reporters and other school staff
- the whole school is encouraged to contribute to risk assessment and mitigation
- the Child Safe Standards are addressed and explained to students and parents/carers during enrolment and transition to CHES programs.

CHES will use its health and wellbeing resources, especially through the transition and induction process, to deliver appropriate education to its students about:

- standards of behaviour for students attending the school
- healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality)
- resilience
- child abuse awareness and prevention.

Specifically, these crucial topics will be incorporated into the CHES residential programs and the transition and induction processes for students enrolled in CHES programs.

COMMUNICATIONS

This school is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- ensuring that the Child Safety Policy (this document), Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure are available on the school website

- once per semester reminders in the CHES newsletter of our school's commitment to child safety
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings and staff meetings for discussion
- communicating child safe strategies with prospective parents, at parent information sessions, volunteer induction processes, and by placing posters throughout the school
- providing the partner universities that conduct Higher Education Studies for CHES students with a copy of the Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct and links to the Child Safe Standards, Child Safety responsibilities, and acceptable and unacceptable behaviours in dealing with students, including the [Guidance for Universities in meeting the Child Safe Standards](#)
- ensuring that child safety is a key criterion when developing Higher Education Studies partnerships and when confirming undergraduate mentors who are involved in mentoring CHES students.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

This school collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law and other relevant laws. The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the Department of Education and Training's [Schools' Privacy Policy](#).

RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Department policies and guidelines:

- [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- [Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools](#)
- [Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Policy and Advisory Library – Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Policy and Advisory Library - Duty of Care](#)
- Policy and Advisory Library - Protecting Children — Reporting and Other Legal Obligations
- Policy and Advisory Library – [Recruitment in Schools](#)
- [Schools' Privacy Policy](#)
- [Guidance for Universities in meeting the Child Safe Standards](#)

The following school policies are also relevant to this policy:

- Code of Conduct
- Child Safety Reporting and Responding Policy
- Child Safety Risk Register

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	January 2022
Approved by	Principal, Stewart Milner
Next scheduled review date	January 2023 - to ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed in January 2023.

NOTE: This document is submitted in compliance with requirements of Ministerial Order 870 - Child Safe Standards - Managing the risk of child abuse in schools. On 1 July 2022, Ministerial Order No. 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools and school boarding

premises will come into effect. CHES will transition to the new standards along with all schools and will update relevant policies to meet the requirements of the new Ministerial Order.