



NOSSAL HIGH SCHOOL CHILD SAFE STANDARDS POLICY

1. Purpose:

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all staff and members of our school community understand the various legal and other reporting obligations related to child safety that apply to Nossal High School.

2. Scope:

- 2.1 This policy applies to all school staff, volunteers and school community members. It also applies to all staff and students engaged in any school and school council-run events, activities and services

3. Policy Statement:

General

- 3.1 All children and young people have the right to protection from the risk of abuse and neglect.
- 3.2 Nossal High School understands the important role our school plays in protecting children.

4. Responsibilities

Compliance, monitoring and review

- 4.1 The Executive Leadership Team are responsible for communicating the NHS Child Safe Standards Policy and related policies with all staff at the beginning of each school year and throughout the year, informing staff of where the policies are located and associated roles and responsibilities
- 4.2 It is the responsibility of Nossal High School staff to comply with the NHS Child Safe Standards Policy
- 4.3 All teaching staff must be VIT registered and Education Support staff must have a valid Working with Children cards.
- 4.4 It is the responsibility of Nossal High School staff to ensure that all contractors, volunteers and any other member of the school community read and consent to the Nossal High School Child Safe Standards Policy and Code of Conduct (Appendix B). A current Working With Children's card / VIT Registration must also be sighted when signing in at Administration.

Reporting

- 4.5 The staff at Nossal High School are required by law to comply with various child safety reporting obligations. For detailed information about each obligation, please refer to [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
- 4.6 Any person can make a report to DHHS Child Protection (131 278 – 24-hour service) if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection.
- 4.7 The policy of the Department of Education and Training (DET) requires all staff who form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection to report their concerns to DHHS or Victoria Police, and discuss their concerns with the school leadership team.
- 4.8 For more information about making a report to DHHS Child Protection, see the Department's *School Policy and Advisory Guide: Child Protection – Making a Report and Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse*.
- 4.9 At Nossal High School we also encourage all staff to make a referral to Child FIRST when they have significant concern for a child's wellbeing. For more information about making a referral to Child FIRST see the School Policy and Advisory Guide: Child Protection – Reporting Obligations.

Records management

4.10 Detailed notes should be made and stored on student file.

4.11 AStaff records should be updated annually with evidence of VIT registration and Working With Children Check.

5. EVALUATION

5.1 This policy will be reviewed annually or more often if necessary due to regulatory requirements.


6. RELATED LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

- To create and maintain a child safe organisation, all Victorian schools must comply with **Ministerial Order No. 870 - Child Safe Standards**, which came into effect 1 August 2016.
<http://www.gazette.vic.gov.au/gazette/Gazettes2016/GG2016S002.pdf>
- Child Protections (PROTECT)
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/default.aspx>
Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools
- Child Safe Standards: Creating a safe environment
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/safeenviro.aspx>
- Child reporting – Reporting Obligations
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/childprotectobligation.aspx>
- Working with Children and Suitability Checks – employees
<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/keyprocess/cp/SitePages/SchoolPoliciesDetail.aspx?CId=89>

7. THIS POLICY IS AVAILABLE ON THE FOLLOWING PLATFORMS:

7.1 School website, Nossal High School Council Policy Records, Nossal High School Staff Handbook

8. APPROVAL AND REVIEW DETAILS

Date Implemented	26th March 2019
Author	Assistant Principal - Curriculum and Pedagogy
Approved By	Nossal High School Council
Approval Authority (Signature & Date)	
Proposed Review Date	March 2020
Responsible for Review	Assistant Principal - Curriculum and Pedagogy
Date Reviewed	March 2019
Amended - YES or NO	

9. Appendices

- Appendix A: NHS Child Safe Standards Policy
- Appendix B: NHS Child Safe Standards Code of Conduct
- Appendix C: Child Safety Reporting Procedures at Nossal High School
- Appendix D: Working with Children and Suitability Checks

10. FEEDBACK

- 10.1 Nossal High School staff and students may provide feedback about this document by emailing nossal.hs@edumail.vic.edu.au.



APPENDIX A:

NHS CHILD SAFE STANDARDS POLICY

All children and young people have the right to protection in their best interests.

Nossal High School understands the important role our school plays in protecting children from abuse including:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse (including sexual exploitation)
- Family violence
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect (including medical neglect)
- Grooming

The staff at Nossal High School are required by law to comply with various child safety reporting obligations. For detailed information about each obligation, please refer to [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#).

At Nossal High School we also recognise the diversity of the children and young people at our school and take account of their individual needs and backgrounds when considering child safety.

Mandatory Reporting

Principals, registered teachers, registered medical practitioners, nurses and all members of the police force are mandatory reporters under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic).

All mandatory reporters must make a report to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection as soon as practicable if, during the course of carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities, they form a belief on reasonable grounds that:

- a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical abuse and/ or sexual abuse, and
- the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.

A mandatory reporter who fails to comply with this legal obligation may be committing a criminal offence. It is important for all staff at Nossal High School to be aware that they are legally obliged to make a mandatory report on each occasion that they form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection and they must make a mandatory report even if the principal does not share their belief that a report is necessary.

At our school, all mandated school staff must undertake the Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations eLearning Module annually. We also require/encourage all other staff to undertake this module, even where they are not mandatory reporters].

For more information about Mandatory Reporting see the Department's *School Policy and Advisory Guide: Child Protection – Reporting Obligations*.

Child in need of protection

Any person can make a report to DHHS Child Protection (131 278 – 24-hour service) if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection.

The policy of the Department of Education and Training (DET) requires all staff who form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection to report their concerns to DHHS or Victoria Police, and discuss their concerns with the school leadership team.

For more information about making a report to DHHS Child Protection, see the Department's *School Policy and Advisory Guide: Child Protection – Making a Report and Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse*.

At Nossal High School we also encourage all staff to make a referral to Child FIRST when they have significant concern for a child's wellbeing. For more information about making a referral to Child FIRST see the *School Policy and Advisory Guide: Child Protection – Reporting Obligations*.

Reportable Conduct

Our school must notify the Department's Employee Conduct Branch (9637 2594) if we become aware of an allegation of 'reportable conduct'.

There is an allegation of reportable conduct where a person has formed a reasonable belief that there has been:

- a sexual offence (even prior to criminal proceedings commencing), sexual misconduct or physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child;
- behaviour causing significant emotional or physical harm to a child;
- significant neglect of a child; or
- misconduct involving any of the above.

The Department, through the Employee Conduct Branch, has a legal obligation to inform the Commission for Children and Young People when an allegation of reportable conduct is made.

Our principal must notify the Department's Employee Conduct Branch of any reportable conduct allegations involving current or former teachers, contractors, volunteers (including parents), allied health staff and school council employees.

If school staff become aware of reportable conduct by any person in the above positions, they should notify the school principal immediately. If the allegation relates to the principal, they should notify the Regional Director.

For more information about Reportable Conduct see the Department's *School Policy and Advisory Guide: Reportable Conduct Scheme*.

Failure to disclose offence

Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults (ie persons aged 18 years and over), not just professionals who work with children, have a legal obligation to report to Victoria Police, as soon as practicable, where they form a 'reasonable belief' that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16 by another person aged 18 years or over.

Failure to disclose information to Victoria Police (by calling 000 or local police station) as soon as practicable may amount to a criminal offence unless a person has a 'reasonable excuse' or exemption from doing so.

"Reasonable belief" is not the same as having proof. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed when:

- a child states that they have been sexually abused
- a child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- someone who knows a child states that the child has been sexually abused
- professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a mandated professional to form a belief that the child has been sexually abused
- signs of sexual abuse leads to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.

“Reasonable excuse” is defined by law and includes:

- fear for the safety of any person including yourself or the potential victim (but not including the alleged perpetrator or an organisation)
- where the information has already been disclosed, for example, through a mandatory report to DHHS Child Protection.

For more information about this reporting obligation, see the Department’s *School Policy and Advisory Guide: Failure to disclose offence*.

Failure to protect offence

This reporting obligation applies to school staff in a position of authority. This can include principals, assistant principals and campus principals. Any staff member in a position of authority who becomes aware that an adult associated with their school (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the age of 16 under their care, authority or supervision, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk.

This may include removing the adult (ie persons aged 18 years and over) from working with children pending an investigation and reporting your concerns to Victoria Police.

If a school staff member in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence.

For more information about this reporting obligation, see the Department’s *School Policy and Advisory Guide: Failure to protect offence*.

Grooming

Grooming is a criminal offence under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic). This offence targets predatory conduct undertaken by an adult to prepare a child, under the age of 16, to engage in sexual activity at a later time. Grooming can include communicating and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent/carer.

For more information about this offence and reporting obligations see: [Child Exploitation and Grooming](#).

APPENDIX B:

NOSSAL HIGH SCHOOL CHILD SAFE STANDARDS CODE OF CONDUCT

Nossal High School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development.

This Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, Department policy, school policies and procedures, and professional standards, codes or ethics as these apply to staff and other personnel.

The Principal and school leaders of Nossal High School will support the implementation and monitoring of the Code of Conduct, and will plan, implement and monitor arrangements to provide an inclusive, safe and orderly school and other learning environments. The Principal and school leaders of Nossal High School will also provide information and support to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively.

All staff, School Council, contractors, volunteers and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work are required to comply with the Code of Conduct by observing expectations for appropriate behaviour below. The Code of Conduct applies in all school situations, including school camps and in the use of digital technology and social media.

Acceptable behaviours

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work individually, we are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- upholding the school's statement of commitment to child safety at all times and adhering to the NHS Child Safe Standards Policy
- treating students and families in the school community with respect both within the school environment and outside the school environment as part of normal social and community activities.
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability
- reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the school's leadership team and/or the Principal.
- understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse.
- ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm if child abuse is suspected.

Unacceptable behaviours

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work we must not:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse
- develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, offering gifts)
- exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as abusive and not justified by the educational, therapeutic, or service delivery context

- ignore behaviours by other adults towards students when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate
- discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental guidance, delivering the education curriculum or a therapeutic setting
- treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity.
- communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to school work or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter
- photograph or video a child in a school environment except in accordance with school policy or where required for duty of care purposes
- in the school environment or at other school events where students are present, consume alcohol contrary to school policy or take illicit drugs under any circumstances.

I, _____(Name) have read and agreed to the above policy.

A Working with Children's Check / VIT Registration has been sighted. (Signed:_____)

This Code of Conduct was endorsed/approved by the Nossal High School Council on 11 December 2018 and will be reviewed if legislative or other changes occur in the interim or no later than December 2019.

SPAG: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/photoandfilm.aspx> . The policy says the school should get consent before taking and publishing photos of a student. This applies every time a photo is taken. The same policy applies for excursions and school activities.

SPAG: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/alcohol.aspx>. The policy says the school must obtain school council approval before alcohol can be consumed on school grounds or at a school activity. The policy says staff members should not consume alcohol during camps and excursions. Nossal High School Council have a policy on the consumption of alcohol at school events.

APPENDIX C

CHILD SAFETY REPORTING PROCEDURES AT NOSSAL HIGH SCHOOL

For students

- All students should feel safe to speak to any staff member to raise any concerns about their safety or any other concerns that they have.
- If a student does not know who to approach at Nossal High School, they should start with a trusted staff member such as their tutorial teacher, the Student Wellbeing Counsellor, Assistant Principal or the Principal.

Managing disclosures made by students

When managing a disclosure, you should:

- listen to the student and allow them to speak
- stay calm and use a neutral tone with no urgency and where possible use the child's language and vocabulary (you do not want to frighten the child or interrupt the child)
- be gentle, patient and non-judgmental throughout
- highlight to the student it was important for them to tell you about what has happened
- assure them that they are not to blame for what has occurred
- do not ask leading questions, for example gently ask, "What happened next?" rather than "Why?"
- be patient and allow the child to talk at their own pace and in their own words
- do not pressure the child into telling you more than they want to, they will be asked a lot of questions by other professionals and it is important not to force them to retell what has occurred multiple times
- reassure the child that you believe them and that disclosing the matter was important for them to do
- use verbal facilitators such as, "I see", restate the child's previous statement, and use non-suggestive words of encouragement, designed to keep the child talking in an open-ended way ("what happened next?")
- tell the child in age appropriate language you are required to report to the relevant authority to help stop the abuse, and explain the role of these authorities if appropriate (for a young child this may be as simple as saying "I will need to talk to people to work out what to do next to help you").

When managing a disclosure, you should AVOID:

- displaying expressions of panic or shock
- asking questions that are investigative and potentially invasive (this may make the child feel uncomfortable and may cause the child to withdraw)
- going over the information repeatedly (you are only gathering information to help you form a belief on reasonable grounds that you need to make a report to the relevant authority)
- making any comments that would lead the student to believe that what has happened is their fault
- making promises to the child about what will occur next or that things will be different given the process can be unpredictable and different for each child depending on their circumstances (instead reassure them that you and others will do your best to help).

General procedures

Our school will follow the [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#) (Four Critical Actions) when responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse.

All staff at our school who believe that a child is in need of protection, even if it doesn't meet the threshold required for mandatory reporting or the staff member is not a mandatory reporter, should in the first instance, speak to Principal or Principals delegate or should make the required reports to DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police as necessary.

At our school the Principal will be responsible for monitoring overall school compliance with this procedure.

Nothing in this procedure prevents a staff member or any other person from reporting to the relevant authorities if they form a reasonable belief that a child is at risk of abuse.

Reporting suspicions, disclosures or incidents of child abuse

Responsibilities of all school staff

If a school staff member reasonably suspects or witnesses an incident of child abuse or receives a disclosure of child abuse, they must:

- If a child is at immediate risk of harm, separate alleged victims and others involved, administer first aid and call 000.
- Speak to the principal/a member of the leadership team/wellbeing team] as soon as possible, who will follow the [Four Critical Actions](#).
- Make detailed notes of the incident or disclosure. It is recommended that the staff member uses the [Responding to Suspected Child Abuse Template](#) and ensures that these notes are kept and stored securely in the student's confidential file.
- If the staff member is a mandatory reporter and reasonably believes that a student has suffered physical and/or sexual abuse from which the child's parents have not protected the child, they must make a report to DHHS Child Protection OR
- If the staff member is a mandatory reporter and reasonably believes that a student has suffered physical and/or sexual abuse from which the child's parents have not protected the child, they must ensure that a report to DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police has been made by a member of staff nominated by the Principal. If the report has not been made by another staff member, the mandatory reporter must make the report.
- If the staff member has formed a 'reasonable belief' that a sexual offence has been against a child, they must make a report to Victoria Police OR
- If the staff member has formed a 'reasonable belief' that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child, they must ensure that a report to Victoria Police has been made by a member of staff nominated by the Principal. If the report has not been made by another staff member, the staff member must make the report.
- In circumstances where a member of the leadership team disagrees that a report needs to be made, but the staff member has formed a 'reasonable belief' that the child is in need of protection and/or has been the victim of sexual abuse, the staff member must still contact DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police to make the report.

Responsibilities of the Principal, or Principal's nominee (including the Student Wellbeing Counsellor) allocated to manage and/or report incidents, suspicions or disclosures to Child Protection or Victoria Police, e.g. Principal/Leadership Team Member/Wellbeing Staff]

The Principal, or Principal's nominee (including the Leadership Team and the Student Wellbeing Counsellor) is responsible for promptly managing the school's response to an incident, suspicion or disclosure of child abuse, and ensuring that the incident, suspicion or disclosure is taken seriously. The Principal, or Principal's nominee (including the Leadership Team and the Student Wellbeing Counsellor) is also responsible for responding appropriately to a child who makes or is affected by an allegation of child abuse.

If the Principal, or Principal's nominee (including the Leadership Team and the Student Wellbeing Counsellor) receives a report from a school staff member or member of the school community of a suspicion, disclosure or incident of child abuse, they must:

- Follow the [Four Critical Actions](#) as soon as possible, including:
 - o Responding to an emergency
 - o Reporting to authorities/referring to services
 - o Contacting parents/carers and
 - o Providing ongoing support.

- Make detailed notes of the incident or disclosure, including actions taken. It is recommended that the staff member uses the [Responding to Suspected Child Abuse Template](#) and ensures that these notes are kept and stored securely in the student's confidential file.
- They are also responsible for ensuring that any staff member who reported the incident, disclosure or suspicion to them also makes and keeps notes of the incident.
- At Nossal High School, the Principal, or Principal's nominee (including the Leadership Team and the Student Wellbeing Counsellor) will be responsible for ensuring that there is a prompt response to the disclosure and that the child is appropriately supported.

Duty of care and ongoing support for students

Fulfilling the requirements in this procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of abuse.

All staff have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm to students. All staff must ensure that the Principal, Leadership Team and Student Wellbeing Counsellors are aware of any incidents, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible after they occur. This will allow appropriate supports to be put in place for the student affected.

For school visitors, volunteers and school community members

All community members aged 18 years or over should be aware of their legal obligations – see Failure to disclose offence above, in this Policy.

Any person can make a report to DHHS Child Protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection. For contact details see the Four Critical Actions -

https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf

There is no requirement for community members to inform the school if they are making a disclosure to DHHS Child Protection or the Victoria Police. However, where a community member is concerned about the safety of a child or children at the school, and where disclosure of that concern will not compromise any potential police investigation, the community member should report this concern to the principal so that appropriate steps to support the student can be taken.

APPENDIX D

WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND SUITABILITY CHECKS - EMPLOYEES

All Victorian government schools are required to comply with the Department's policy in relation to Working with Children Checks and other suitability checks for all employees (both Department and school council employees) - see HRWeb [Suitability for Employment](#). Schools should not have a local policy in relation to Working with Children Checks or other employment suitability checks **for employees** as the Department's policy (which incorporates legal requirements under Ministerial Orders) must be followed.

The Minimum Standards for school registration require schools to:

- maintain a **register** of all staff with a Working with Children Check; and
- have **procedures** for maintaining that register.

A register of staff holding a Working with Children Check (including names, registration numbers and expiry dates) can be generated from CASES21 or schools may choose to keep a separate table or spreadsheet as their register. Schools should develop a local procedure for who is responsible for recording each staff member's Working With Children Check information in the register or in CASES21 at the commencement of employment and following up with them when the expiry date is reached.

Nossal High School Implementation: Working with Children and Suitability Checks - employees

Ensure that all staff with involvement in recruitment processes for both DET and school council employees are aware of the Department's [Suitability for Employment Policy](#) on HR Web.

Ensure that the Department's [Suitability for Employment Policy](#) on HR Web is followed during all recruitment processes.

Include relevant links to the Department's [Suitability for Employment Policy](#) on HR Web in staff induction and Staff Handbooks/manuals for relevant staff.

HR / Personnel

Personnel Management is handled by the HR Team comprising of Roger Page (Principal), Gayl Shute (Business Manager) and Tracey Di Lollo (HR /Executive Assistant). Personnel matters are treated with strict confidentiality and privacy. This guide has been compiled to provide staff with basic Human Resource information and expectations as set out by the Department of Education and Training (DET).

VIT Registration

Employees in the principal class, teacher class and paraprofessional class are employed pursuant to the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 and are required to have valid and current registration with the [Victorian Institute of Teaching](#) as a condition of employment.

Employees in the Education Support Class

All employees who are required to engage in 'child -related work' must hold a current, valid, employee type Working With Children Check (WWC Check) card to be employed by the Department.

Employees may enter or update their WWC Check card information directly on eduPay in Employee Self Service (ESS). The WWC Check page is located in ESS under the Personal Information page. You are able to view, update and confirm your WWC Check card number and expiry date. If you make an amendment to your details or confirm currently held information you may attach supporting documentation, such as a copy of your WWC Check card, which can be viewed and validated by your Principal and HR Administrator.

Casual Relief Teachers

Casual relief teachers are required to be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching. Accordingly they qualify for an exemption from the Working with Children Act 2005 and do not require a WWC Check.

Other Casual Employees

Casual employees in schools, other than casual relief teachers, are required to demonstrate their suitability for employment by undergoing a WWC Check and/or a criminal record check conducted by the Department.

Not all casual employees in schools will be required by the Act to undergo a WWC Check; it will depend on whether their duties meet the definition of 'child-related work' as defined in the Act.

Personal information is held in accordance with the Department of Education and Training (DET) Privacy Policy.

