



Child Safety Complaints and Concerns Policy PP023

Plenty River College (the College) is an independent, specialist senior secondary school and a Registered Training Organisation (RTO Code: 22732), delivering the Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC) and VCE Vocational Major (VM) and Vocational Education and Training (VET) Certificates. The College provides a safe and inclusive learning environment for young people aged 15-20 years who may have been disengaged or are at risk of disengaging from education.

Plenty River College is a school of opportunities in which all students are empowered to achieve their personal best. Our mission is to assist students to develop life and work skills and achieve in their learning by:

- re-engaging them in education;
- fostering their social and emotional development; and
- providing a supportive and safe environment for them.

Rationale

Plenty River College is committed to child safety and will comply with Ministerial Order No. 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises (Ministerial Order 1359).

All Plenty River College staff have a legal responsibility to ensure the safety, security and wellbeing of students. Creating safe places for children and young people to fully and actively participate in the life of the community benefits everyone.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the College:

- provides a consistent, transparent and culturally safe response to all child safety-related complaints or concerns;
- manages complaints and concerns related to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people;
- is compliant with Ministerial Order No. 1359; and
- upholds its legislative obligations such as the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic), the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic), and the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic).

This policy applies to all concerns or complaints regarding child safety and wellbeing including:

- breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- allegations or suspicions of child abuse, including neglect or grooming
- allegations of inappropriate behaviour by staff, volunteers, visitors, or contractors
- any risk to a child's psychological, emotional or physical safety
- child-on-child harmful behaviours
- concerns about the College's response to any of the above



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Scope

This policy applies to all College staff, students, parents, the College Board, volunteers, contractors and visitors whether or not they work in direct contact with students.

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Plenty River College is a child safe organisation which welcomes young people who may have disengaged or are at risk of disengaging from education and their families. We are committed to providing environments where students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

We have zero tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our settings and environments. We promote positive relationships between students and staff and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in the College environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from migrant and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQA+), students in Out of Home Care settings and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at the College, and any instances identified are addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in the College has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety. We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

Diversity and Cultural Safety

PRC ensures that its complaints procedures are sensitive to the diversity and characteristics of its school community. This is demonstrated through its inclusive and culturally safe approach, recognising the needs of Aboriginal students, culturally and linguistically diverse students, students with disability, LGBTIQA+ students, Students at out of home care and those experiencing vulnerability or disengagement.

Child Safety Concern or Complaint

A child safety or wellbeing complaint or concern is any concern that a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or has experienced inappropriate behaviour or conduct. The Child Wellbeing and Safety



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Act 2005 (Vic) defines a concern to include sexual offences, including grooming, sexual misconduct, physical violence, or behaviour that causes significant emotional harm or neglect.

The College's Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy provides comprehensive guidance on types of behaviours and conducts that is considered harmful or inappropriate, including child on child sexual behaviours or offending and how to respond to them

Anyone connected with the College can raise a concern, including:

- students and/or parents
- staff (teaching or non-teaching)
- volunteers or contractors
- visitors
- Board members
- members of the wider college community

Concerns may be raised:

- In person to a trusted staff member or Chairman of the Board
- By phone or via the [Contact section](#) of the College website
- In writing to the Executive Principal or Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader

Where the concern relates to the Executive Principal, the matter should be reported to the Chair of the College Board via drl@prc.vic.edu.au.

Supporting students affected by allegations of Child Abuse

When a child safety concern or allegation is raised, the College will safeguard the student's safety and wellbeing as soon as possible. We will ensure students and families feel safe and supported throughout the process and that our practices are respectful and sensitive to the needs of the affected student and their family.

The College will provide any immediate support required to ensure the student's safety and removal from the alleged source of harm. We will nominate a trusted staff member (e.g. Wellbeing Team Leader or classroom teacher) to offer immediate emotional support and connect the student to wellbeing services appropriate to the family's religious or cultural background. These may include social workers, child psychologists or health practitioners.

The College will manage any allegations with confidentiality by limiting disclosure of the concern or allegation to only those who need to know, to manage the response and communicating sensitively with parents or families to protect student privacy.

The College will report allegations to authorities in accordance with its reporting obligations and Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy (such as to Victoria Police or Child Protection) as well as to other relevant external services (such as the Orange Door or counselling and wellbeing services).

All reports, actions taken, and support provided will be maintained securely in accordance with the PROTECT reporting guidelines and resources.



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The College will regularly check in with the student and their family to ensure the support provided is adequate and effective making adjustments where necessary. College leadership will also provide any necessary support to other affected students or staff, as required.

Confidentiality, Privacy and Information Sharing

All complaints or concerns are managed with sensitivity and in accordance with relevant privacy laws. The College will:

- Protect the identity of reporters where possible and appropriate
- Inform students and families of how information will be used
- Share information under the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS) where permitted or required
- Retain records securely in accordance with legal and policy requirements

Actions to be implemented by the College

Concerns or complaints may be received by any member of the College community and staff will need to gather relevant information from the person raising a concern or making a complaint. The relevant College staff member will refer the matter to the Executive Principal (or delegate) to investigate the concern or complaint about child safety or a child abuse allegation by:

- Ensuring all relevant details are sought and recorded including information about the party or parties involved.
- Confirming the relevant details, without seeking extensive information, or asking irrelevant, suggestive or leading questions (refer to PROTECT Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse, for guidance on what and how to record relevant details of the concern or complaint).
- Taking a detailed file note (refer to PROTECT Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse, for guidance on recording relevant information).
- Explaining when necessary that other people may need to be informed about the concern, in order to stop any inappropriate or unlawful behaviour and to comply with the College's legal obligations and procedures.
- Advising that the College takes all concerns or complaints of this nature seriously and will act on the information provided.
- Where required, ensuring that interpreters are provided to all parties by the College.
- Offering appropriate support to the student(s) or parties involved in the concern including their parents, carers, or families. The College may need to refer parties to wellbeing and support services internally or external to the College (as required).
- Outlining the process that will be followed by the College in dealing with the concern or complaint as described in this procedure.



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- The decision-maker will usually be the Executive Principal, except where the concern relates to the alleged conduct or misconduct of the Executive Principal then the decision-maker will be the Chair of the College Board.

Resolution of Concern or Complaint

If a concern or complaint is substantiated, the Executive Principal (or delegate) will take appropriate action. The nature of the concern or complaint will inform the action to be taken. This may include, but is not limited to:

- reallocation of staff duties
- providing a staff member or all staff with further child safety training as well as appropriate cultural safety training where relevant
- requiring staff to undertake mandatory reporting refresher training
- terminating employment of staff for serious misconduct
- cessation of voluntary duties of a volunteer
- providing ongoing counselling support for affected students
- implementation of Student Behaviour Support Plan
- suspension of student enrolment
- termination of student enrolment
- removal of Board member from the College Board
- reporting to Victoria Police or Child Protection
- making a Reportable Conduct report to the-Social Services Regulator-(SSR)

Where a concern is not substantiated, the findings made by the Executive Principal during the course of investigating the concern may, in certain cases, still result in disciplinary action (e.g. reallocation of duties, mentoring program, suspension etc).

Following the conclusion of its investigation, the Executive Principal will indicate the outcomes of the investigation to:

- The person (student and/or parents, etc) who raised the concern or complaint.
- The person subject of that concern or complaint (where appropriate).
- Authorities to whom a report is required to be made such as to Child Protection, Victoria Police or SSR

Recordkeeping

The Executive Principal will ensure that:



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- clear records of any concerns or complaints are taken, where possible, by the staff member or volunteer who received information about the incident, disclosure or suspicion using the PROTECT resources
- detailed notes are taken of any immediate or ongoing action taken by the College to respond to the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion
- all relevant records relating to the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion, including the actions taken by the College, are stored securely and maintain privacy of affected persons as appropriate to the situation
- an incident report is provided to the College Board for appropriate oversight.

Appropriate confidentiality and procedural fairness will be maintained at all times when dealing with concerns and complaints under this procedure. Information will only be provided to those parties who have the right or legal authority to seek information.

Communication

This policy will be communicated to all staff, students, parents and the college community.

Related Legislation

- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
- Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)
- Ministerial Order No. 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises

Related Policies

- Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Statement of Commitment to Child Safety
- Child Safety Policy and Procedures
- Child Safety – Equity and Diversity Policy
- Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy
- Child Safety Recruitment Policy
- Child Safety Risk Register
- Child Safety Volunteer Policy and Procedure
- Child Safety Visitor Policy and Procedure
- Complaints and Grievances Policy



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- Duty of Care Policy
- Digital Technologies and Social Media Policy
- Maintaining Staff Registers Policy (VIT & WWCC)
- Privacy Policy
- Restrictive Interventions Policy
- Student Behaviour Management Policy
- Volunteer Policy and Procedures PP004

Appendix 1: Step by Step Procedure

Step	Action	Responsibility
Step 1	A concern or complaint is received	By any staff member or designated contact
Step 2	Assess immediate safety – Is the child/student in immediate danger?	Staff or volunteer receiving the complaint
Step 3	If in danger, contact Police (000) or Child Protection immediately	Any staff member, volunteer, Executive Principal or Assistant Principal
Step 4	Record the complaint in detail	Staff receiving the complaint
Step 5	Notify the Executive Principal and/or Assistant Principal without delay	Staff receiving complaint
Step 6	Determine the type of concern: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory report • Crimes Act offence (failure to protect, failure to disclose, grooming offence) • Breach of Code of Conduct • Reportable conduct 	Note: Mandated reporters must report event if a report has been made to the Executive Principal and/or Assistant Principal to meet their legal obligations
Step 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make required external reports/notifications • The Executive Principal must consult with DFFH - Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers 	Executive Principal and/or Assistant Principal and/or mandated reporter



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They may advise not to contact parents/carers e.g. in circumstances where the parents/carers are alleged to have engaged in the abuse or to contact the parents/carers as soon as possible (preferably on the same day) and provide agreed information • Notify the Chair of the College Board 	
<p>Step 8</p>	<p>Acknowledge complaint and inform relevant parties of the process, timelines and supports (only where informing parties would not further endanger a child)</p> <p>All child safety concerns or complaints will be dealt with formally and in writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All concerns or complaints will be acknowledged in writing within 48 hours of receipt, however lodged. • The Executive Principal or delegate will make every reasonable effort to investigate such matters within 15 working days of receipt. When this is not possible, the College will inform the complainant in writing of the delay and the reasons for it, and the expected timeframe for completion. • In conducting the investigation, the process will comply with the overarching principles as outlined in the Complaints and Grievances Policy. The complainant will be provided an outcome in writing, and a formal meeting will be arranged. • Where the Executive Principal is unavailable or the subject of the concern, responsibility will transfer to the Assistant Principal or Chair of the College Board. • Where the Assistant Principal is unavailable or conflicted, responsibility will transfer to the Executive Principal or Chair of the College Board. • Where required, the College Board Chair will assume oversight to ensure appropriate handling of the matter. 	<p>Executive Principal or delegate</p>
<p>Step 9</p>	<p>Conduct internal investigation if appropriate (except where prohibited due to active Police/Child Protection involvement)</p>	<p>Executive Principal / delegate</p>



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Step 10	Cooperate fully with external authorities (i.e SSR, Police, Child Protection)	Executive Principal and/or College Board Chair
Step 11	Provide regular updates to complainant, respecting privacy and safety	Executive Principal and/or Assistant Principal
Step 12	Determine outcome and implement appropriate action: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Plans for student affected • Further training in child safety, reporting obligations, etc for staff/volunteers/College Board, etc • Referral to counsellor/psychologist/medical practitioners 	Executive Principal and/or Assistant Principal
Step 13	Document all steps taken in a secure, confidential file	Executive Principal and/or Assistant Principal
Step 14	Provide support to student/s, families, staff and other members of the college community affected	Executive Principal and/or Assistant Principal
Step 15	Review college child safety policies and procedures; review and update as required the child safety risk register	Led by Executive Principal
Step 16	Report to College Board	Principal

When complying with this procedure, it must be noted that fulfilling the roles and responsibilities contained herein will not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a student is at risk of child abuse or reportable conduct



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Revision Record:

Date	Version	Revision description
17/11/2025	V2025.1	Initial Policy
24/03/2026	V2025.1.1	<p>Minor edits</p> <p>Replace reference of Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) to Social Services Regulator (SSR) and updated relevant reporting website link</p> <p>Added</p> <p>Diversity and Cultural Safety</p> <p>PRC ensures that its complaints procedures are sensitive to the diversity and characteristics of its school community. This is demonstrated through its inclusive and culturally safe approach, recognising the needs of Aboriginal students, culturally and linguistically diverse students, students with disability, LGBTIQ+ students, Students at out of home care and those experiencing vulnerability or disengagement.</p> <p>Procedure Delegation identification</p> <p>Where the Executive Principal is unavailable or the subject of the concern, responsibility will transfer to the Assistant Principal or Chair of the College Board.</p> <p>Where the Assistant Principal is unavailable or conflicted, responsibility will transfer to the Executive Principal or Chair of the College Board.</p> <p>Where required, the College Board Chair will assume oversight to ensure appropriate handling of the matter.</p>