



"Caring for Excellence"

Child Safe Policy

Viewbank College's commitment to child safety

- Viewbank College wants children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
- Viewbank College is committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
- Viewbank College has zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- Viewbank College has legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- Viewbank College is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- Viewbank College has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- Viewbank College is committed to training and educating our staff and volunteers regularly on child abuse risks.
- Viewbank College supports and respects all students, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island (ATSI) students, the cultural safety of students from a Culturally and/or Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background, and to providing a safe and inclusive environment for LGTBQI students and students with a disability.
- Viewbank College has specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.
- If staff believe a child is at immediate risk either DHS or the police will be contacted.

Our Students

This policy is intended to empower students who are vital and active participants at Viewbank College. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

The College promotes diversity and tolerance, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) students.
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Children from Culturally and/or Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds.
- Ensure that students with a disability are safe and can participate equally
- Seek to foster a safe environment that is supportive and inclusive of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning and Intersex (LGBTQI) students.

Our staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with students at Viewbank College.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with students. All staff and volunteers, as well as students and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Code of Conduct.

Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our College community understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Viewbank College culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and students) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess and minimise risks of child abuse, and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect students from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of ATSI and CALD children, and the safety of LGTBQI students and students with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand Viewbank College's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting students from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards students is safe and appropriate. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with students. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Viewbank College understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from ATSI peoples, people from CALD backgrounds, LGTBQI people and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check.

Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of our students is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to students and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or students, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative responsibilities

Viewbank College takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 has an obligation to report that information to the police.
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our College will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

Risk management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our students.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a student from Viewbank College on social media).

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that staff members, families and students have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible, we do our best to work with local ATSI and CALD communities and people with a disability.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Viewbank College takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

The College works to ensure all students, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

All members of Viewbank College have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if there is a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about 'Failure to disclose' above).

If an adult member of Viewbank College has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred, then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- A student states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the student may in fact be referring to themselves).
- Behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed.
- Someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it.
- Observing suspicious behaviour.