

The Avenue School

Policy & Procedure Document

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Drafted by	J. Claringbold	Approved by Board on	25/06/2024
Responsible person	Principal	Scheduled review date	25/06/2027
Policy Area	Student Welfare		

Title: Online Safety

Introduction

The Avenue School must ensure physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children, young people and students to be harmed. Online safety also includes the safe and responsible use of information and communication technologies. This includes privacy and information protection, respectful communication and knowing how to get help to deal with online issues.

Common online safety issues and risks of harm online include:

- Cyber bullying is the ongoing abuse of power to threaten or harm another person through the use of technology (Refer to our Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy).
- Exposure to inappropriate imagery or content.
- Grooming is predatory conduct to gain trust from a child and the people surrounding the child with the intention to commit later sexual abuse
- Image-based abuse or sexting is the sending or posting of provocative or sexual photos, messages or videos online.
- Identity theft is the fraudulent assumption of a person's private information for their personal gain. Students are exposed to these risks as they are often unaware of the safety issues surrounding their digital footprint.
- Predatory behaviour where a student is targeted online by a stranger who attempts to arrange a face-to-face meeting, in an attempt to engage in inappropriate behaviour.

Scope

This policy applies to all School online and virtual environments made available or authorised by the school for use by a student, including emails, portals, intranet systems, software application, collaboration tools and online services, on devices owned by the school and personal devices.

Online safety issues most commonly occur through a student's use of their own technology devices (e.g. smart phone, tablet, iPad, laptop, home computer). Safe use of technology whilst at school is managed through our Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy. The ICT Policy addresses responsible online conduct, as does the Student Code of Conduct and the Student Internet Usage Agreement.

This policy applies to students and school staff (which includes employees, contractors, volunteers). Further, online conduct is also governed by the relevant Codes of Conduct.

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Policy Statement

The school recognises its duty to students to provide a safe and positive learning environment which includes the safe, appropriate and responsible use of information and communication technologies and safety in all aspects of the school environment.

The school environment includes online and virtual school environments made available or authorised by the school for use by students.

It is our policy that:

- Online environments and online conduct should be promoted as a valuable educational tool.
- Online safety be managed through a 'whole of school community' approach involving students, staff and parents/guardians.
- Online safety and cyber bullying prevention strategies be implemented within the school on a continuous basis with a focus on teaching age-appropriate skills and strategies to empower staff, students and parents/carers to recognise online safety issues and respond appropriately.
- Cyber bullying response strategies be tailored to the circumstances of each incident.
- Our bullying prevention, intervention and online safety strategies are reviewed on an annual basis against best practice.

Online safety strategies

The school recognises that implementing whole of school online safety strategies is the most effective way of minimising risks related to our students engaging in online activity.

The following initiatives form part of our overall online safety strategy within the school.

Identification and mitigation of risks includes:

- Regular risk assessments of online safety are undertaken by surveying students to identify online safety issues and prior to introducing new online systems or software.
- Reporting of online safety incidents is encouraged and made easy through the establishment of multiple reporting channels.
- Records of reported online safety incidents are maintained and analysed, in order to identify systemic issues and to implement targeted prevention strategies where appropriate.

Education and empowerment of students is achieved through:

- A structured curriculum and peer group support system, that provides age-appropriate information and skills relating to online safety (including cyber bullying) to students over the course of the academic year.
- Promotion of a supportive environment that encourages the development of positive relationships and communication in the online world.
- Promotion of responsible bystander behaviour amongst students, so students know how they can report online safety issues to the school and will be taken seriously.
- Promotion of students' rights to privacy and access to information.
- Promotion of student online safety awareness by participating in relevant online safety related events.
- Online safety posters are displayed strategically within the school.

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Role of adults in the school community includes:

- Education, training and professional development of staff in online safety strategies.
- Regular provision of information to parents/carers to raise awareness of online safety as a school community issue. This will equip them to recognise signs of online safety risks, as well as to provide them with clear paths for raising any concerns they may have relating to online safety and/or cyber bullying directly with the school.
- Promotion of responsible bystander behaviour amongst staff and parents/carers (this may occur where a bystander observes inappropriate online behaviour either being perpetrated by, or targeted at, a student).

Internet usage monitoring involves:

- The school monitoring internet usage by students in Outlook and OneDrive. Automated content searches flag inappropriate content which is captured by IT then reported to the school's youth worker.

Staff Responsibility

All staff must:

- a) Model appropriate online behaviour at all times.
- b) Refer any online safety related issues to the Online Safety Primary Contacts.
- c) Acknowledge the right of parents to speak with school authorities if they believe their child is being bullied.

Community engagement

If parents, carers, Staff, children or young people have feedback about this Policy and/or the school's online safety practices, please contact the Principal. The Avenue School takes a whole-of-school approach to manage online safety for our students and ensure families and the school community have a say in the development of this policy and related procedures.

Signage

Online safety posters are displayed strategically around the school.

Privacy

When implementing online safety strategies, Staff need to consider the privacy of students. For example, ongoing monitoring and surveillance of all online activities may not be appropriate, however, when a specific risk is identified, intervention may be appropriate.

Staff can empower students to understand their privacy rights and protect themselves online by teaching students:

- How to manage their digital wellbeing and their digital identity.
- What strong and secure passwords are.
- How to respond to someone asking them to send a photo.
- What methods of online communicate are appropriate for different purposes.

Implementation

This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- Staff training.
- Student and parent/carer education and information.
- Effective incident reporting procedures.
- Effective management of online safety incidents when reported.
- The creation of a 'no bullying' culture within the school community.
- Automated monitoring of internet usage and reporting to the Principal or Youth Worker.
- Effective record keeping procedures; and
- Initiation of corrective actions where necessary.

Discipline for Breach of Policy

- Where a staff member breaches this policy the school will take disciplinary action, including in the case of serious breaches, summary dismissal.
- Where a student breaches this Policy, it may be considered a breach of the Student Code of Conduct, for example for cyber bullying.

Useful resources

- Esmart - <https://www.esmart.org.au/>
- e-Safety Commissioner - <https://www.esafety.gov.au/>
- ThinkUKnow - <https://www.thinkuknow.org.au/>
- Safer Internet Day - <https://www.saferinternetday.org/>