



POLICY

NAME:	Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy May 2024
UPDATE DUE:	May 2026, or more often as circumstances require

Commitment to child safety

Camberwell Girls Grammar School (CGGS) is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people, their families and their participation. We are committed to providing culturally inclusive environments where all our students are safe and feel safe, and have confidence their voice is heard. We promote positive interactions between students and adults, and between students and their peers based on mutual trust and respect.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Everyone engaged or employed by CGGS has a role to play in promoting child safety. All are aware of their responsibility to promptly raise issues or concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing. We have zero tolerance for child abuse and we take proactive steps to identify children who may be at risk or experiencing vulnerability to mitigate harm or distress.

Particular attention is given to the safety needs of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with disabilities, international students, those unable to live at home and children and young people who identify as LGBTQIA+.

We regularly seek input from students, parents, carers, staff and volunteers in our child safe practices and communicate our policies and ongoing strategies following each systematic review.

Purpose

The Child Safety and Wellbeing policy demonstrates Camberwell Girls Grammar School's (CGGS) commitment to creating and maintaining a child safety and a child friendly school where children and young people are and feel safe. It provides an overview of our approach to implementing Ministerial Order 1359 which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments. It informs our school community of everyone's obligations to act safely towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, the School Council and School Management Team members, children and other individuals involved in our School community whether or not they work in direct contact with students. This policy applies to all physical and online environments, including locations on and off school campus (used by students) and provided through third party providers. This policy should be read together with other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and codes of conduct noted at the end of this Policy.

Definitions

CGGS	Camberwell Girls Grammar School
School	CGGS
Students	All students enrolled at CGGS including International Students
Staff	All staff employed at CGGS
Parents	Parents, guardians, carers

Child Abuse	Any action or inaction towards a child that harms or puts at risk their physical, psychological or emotional health or development. Child abuse can be a single incident or incidents that occur over time. Forms of child abuse can involve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical abuse • Sexual abuse • Grooming • Emotional abuse • Neglect • Family violence • Online/cyber abuse
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.
Concerns And Complaints	A concern refers to any potential issue that could impact negatively on the safety and wellbeing of children. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction to the School related to one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • services or dealings with individuals. • allegations of abuse or misconduct by a staff member, contractor, volunteer or another individual associated with the School. • disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child or young person. • the conduct of a child or young person at School. • the inadequate handling of a prior concern. • general concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity.
Grooming	Grooming is a criminal offence in Victoria as per section 49B of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) and concerns predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time. The offence applies where an adult communicates, by words or conduct, with a child under the age of 16 years or with a person who has care, supervision or authority for the child with the intention of facilitating the child's involvement in sexual conduct, either with the groomer or another adult.
Harm	Damage to the health, safety and wellbeing of a Child, including as a result of Child Abuse by adults or the conduct of other children. Harm can arise from a single act or event and can also be cumulative, that is, arising as a result of a series of acts or events over a period of time.
School Environment	Any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the School for use by a student during or outside school hours, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On campus. • Other locations owned or provided by the School for a student's use, including locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events. • Online school environments including approved social media groups set up for School communication, email, the learning management system, and intranet systems.
Child-connected work	Work performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.
Child-related work	Work that usually involves (or is likely to involve) direct contact with a child (including oral, written or electronic communication as well as face-to-face and physical contact) that is a central part of that person's duties. Child-related work may be either paid or unpaid (voluntary). It does not include work that involves only occasional direct contact with children that is incidental to that person's work.

Mandatory Reporting	A child safety mechanism introduced as a result of the <i>Betrayal of Trust Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations</i> to protect any child under the care and supervision from foreseeable harm.
Reportable Conduct Scheme	A further child safety mechanism introduced as a result of the <i>Betrayal of Trust Inquiry</i> . The Reportable Conduct Scheme complements the Child Safe Standards and other existing child safety measures.
WWCC	Working With Children Check. Working With Children Clearance.
WH&S	Work Health and Safety

Roles and Responsibilities

The **School Council** is responsible for:

- overseeing the implementation of a child safe culture with the broader school community.
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at School Council meetings so that a culture of child safety is being embedded and School Council members are informed and understand any issues of a child safety concern.
- undertaking annual training on child safety.
- approving updates to, and act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to School Council members.
- being aware of information sharing and record keeping obligations.

The **School Principal** is responsible for:

- prioritising student safety and taking action when a concern is raised about the safety of students.
- developing strategies and initiatives to embed a culture of child safety within the School.
- when engaging School Council members, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe.

The **Educational Leadership Team** (comprising the Principal, Deputy Principal, relevant Heads of School and Director of Learning Design and Development) and the **Child Safety Officers** are responsible for:

- ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.
- ensuring effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed.
- modelling a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing.
- enabling inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered.
- reinforcing high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students.
- promoting regular open discussion on child safety issues within the school community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings.
- facilitating regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understanding of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of harm and responding to abuse.
- creating an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

The **School Staff** and **Volunteers** will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and ongoing training provided by the school and always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures.
- act in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Response and Reporting Policy, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#).
- Ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.
- Implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

Specific staff child safety responsibilities

The School has nominated Child Safety Officers at both Senior and Junior Schools and the Early Learning Centre to support the Principal to implement our child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training.

The responsibilities of the Child Safety Officer are outlined at [Guidance for child safety champions](#). In addition to these roles, our Child Safety Officers are also responsible for:

- promoting a child safety and wellbeing culture throughout the school.
- acting as a source of support, providing advice and focus to staff on child safety needs of vulnerable students.
- listening to students and families and act on child safety concerns.
- liaising with the school's leadership team to decide on legislative reporting requirements.

Our Principal and Child Safety Officers are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

- The **Deputy Principal** and **Heads of School** are responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Anyone in our school community should approach the Deputy Principal if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- The **Deputy Principal** and **Heads of School** are responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available.
- The **School Counsellors** run an annual Child Safety Officer training for all Child Safety Officers.
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Response and Reporting Policy, and Child Safety Risk Register.

Our school also has a Wellbeing Team for both Senior and Junior Schools where concerns of a child safety nature are discussed. The Wellbeing Team meets regularly to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing. In addition, the School Counsellors also meet separately with the Deputy Principal and relevant Heads of School fortnightly.

The School Council's Risk and Governance Committee monitors the Child Safety Risk Register.

Our current Child Safety Officers are promoted throughout the School.

Child Safety Officers: Junior and Senior School

Principal
Deputy Principal
School Counsellors
School Chaplain

Child Safety Officers: Junior School

Head of Junior School
Deputy Head of Junior School
Early Learning Co-ordinator

Child Safety Officers: Senior School

Head of Senior School
Head of Middle School
VCE Co-ordinator
Head of Educational Operations
Education Outdoors Coordinaor

Code of Conduct

Our Codes of Conduct and Professional Boundaries Policy set the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing

CGGS identifies, assesses and manages risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk assessments, such as those we develop for off-site overnight camps, excursions, adventure activities and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our Child Safety Officers will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

The School's approach to promoting child safety and managing risk in the physical and online environments is through:

- Student Welfare and Safety Policy (includes Student Behaviour and ICT Policy);
- Student Surveys (results published in the School's annual report); and
- Wellbeing lessons specifically outlining safety in the physical and online environments.

Establishing a culturally safe environment

We are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

We acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of the Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and students and we promote cultural safety in our school community.

We encourage the school community to acknowledge Aboriginal culture through:

- The Acknowledgement of Country at commencement of functions and meetings and acknowledgement on email signature clause.
- Flying of the Aboriginal Flag on school campus.
- Dara Aboriginal labyrinth: plaque signifying this sanctuary within the school grounds acknowledges the Wurundjeri people and is a safe cultural space for reflection.
- Partnering with the Aboriginal Community:
 - Aboriginal cultural program participated by years ELC-Y12 led by Murrundindi.
 - Mungo Living Culture Program Camp: opportunity for staff and students to participate and experience in the Aboriginal culture and the importance of this to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children.
 - Melbourne Indigenous Transition School (MITS) partnership program.

Student Empowerment

To support child safety and wellbeing at CGGS, we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the school to ensure a sense of belonging through involvement in co-curricular activities and clubs, implementing our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships being taught during Health classes and Wellbeing lessons in Senior School and during designated times in the BRAVE program for our Junior School students. Respect is reflected through our Student Codes of Conduct and our school values.

We inform students of their rights through assemblies twice a year by the School Counsellors, in our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships or our BRAVE program, and give them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students as a means to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers. We ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feel unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time. Students and families can also access information on how to report concerns by contacting:

- For Students: CGGS Child Safety Officers
- For Parents: Deputy Principal and Heads of School

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

We promote child safety through:

- age-appropriate presentations, in our newsletters and in welcome packs to staff, students and volunteers.
- having a child friendly version of this policy and Code of Conduct developed with student input and available on our school website.
- prominently displaying at the top of all school policies our Child Safety Commitment, displaying our commitment in our Senior and Junior School and Early Learning School receptions, and inclusion in our job advertisements, onboarding, enrolment and International Student packs.
- nominated Child Safety Officers to champion a child safe culture.
- displaying child safety and Child Safety Officer posters across the school in key areas such as Student Services Reception, VCE Common Room, Brooksbank Library, Year Level Co-ordinator Offices, Counsellor Offices, Café, Junior School and Early Learning Receptions so staff and students are aware of who the Child Safety Officers are.

We will seek input from students as to what matters for them and discussing students' rights and safety issues through various forums.

Family Engagement

Our families and the school community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, we are committed to providing families and our community with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement through the parent portal, newsletters, other communications, student, staff, and parent meetings.

We will inform and engage families and the community about all of our child safety policies and procedures

- by making child safety information and policies available for students and parents.
- via Parent Lounge each time they sign in. .
- via myCGGS portal: Class pages for Foundation – Year 6 students.
- via Senior School and Junior School Weekly.
- through newsletters and publications such as CamNews, Principal’s News, CamLife and Term newsletters about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.
- providing families with information to help them to talk to their children about safety and wellbeing at home.
- engaging parents, carers and students and discussing the needs of students through learning conversations.
- through our Parent Education seminar series each year.
- providing other frequent opportunities for parents and carers to engage with staff to discuss their children’s experiences at school such as incorporating child safety questions in parent and carer surveys to measure awareness and confidence in CGGS’ child safety approach and to support ongoing improvement.
- reminding the school community about the shared roles of parents, carers and school staff in creating a positive environment for learning by promoting the Student Welfare and Safety Policy.

Diversity and Equity

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal children and young people.
- Children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Children and young people with disabilities.
- Children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence.
- International students.
- Children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Our Student Welfare and Safety Policy, provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

We support diversity through:

- Our School Vision, Mission and Values Statement.
- In Chaplain assemblies.
- Junior and Senior School assemblies.
- By recognising dates in our School Community such as:
 - Cultural Diversity Week (March).
 - International Women’s Day (8 March).
 - National Reconciliation Week (27 May–3 June).
 - Language and Culture Week.
 - CamberWELL week.

Dates in our Senior school community such as:

- IDAHOBIT (International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism and Transphobia (17 May).
- World Mental Health Day (10 October).
- International Day of Persons with Disability (3 December).
- Supporting diverse projects at Junior School:
 - Sponsoring a World Vision Child each year.
 - Winter Warmth Appeal (Anglicare).
 - Christmas Gift Giving (Anglicare).
- Supporting diverse projects at Senior School, some include:

- Winter Sleep Out Appeal (The Salvation Army).
- Disadvantaged Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support (River Nile Learning Centre).
- Days for Girls, Dream Stitches, Zonta Birthing Kits.
- In publications and social media, we utilise images of students with diverse features to reflect the school community.

Suitable staff and volunteers

At CGGS, we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

Staff Recruitment

When recruiting staff, we follow the CGGS policies:

- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Our job advertisements and position descriptions have clear statements about duties and responsibilities, essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes all relating to child safety and wellbeing.

Attention is given to the interview panel composition, that members have the right skills and experience to perform their role and that employment interviews comprise a child safety discussion to ascertain the candidate's knowledge. Second or subsequent interviews conducted by the Principal or Deputy Principal comprise a further child safety discussion to ascertain a candidate's suitability for interaction with CGGS students.

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children Check or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching registration.
- collect and record:
 - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications.
 - the person's history of working with children.
 - at least two references that address suitability for the job and working with children including three (3) questions for each reference check focusing on child safety suitability of the applicant.

Staff Onboarding & Induction

All newly appointed staff are sent child safety information as part of their onboarding paperwork, prior to commencing with CGGS. New staff are expected to sign a declaration that they have read and understood the following CGGS policies and agree to abide by them:

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safety Response and Reporting Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Working with Children Policy
- Whistleblower Protection Policy and Procedure

All newly appointed staff are expected to attend the CGGS induction program, which includes child safety and wellbeing. Staff are also expected to sign a declaration that they have read and understood all School Policies and Procedures and the information provided in the Staff Handbook.

Ongoing supervision and management of staff

All staff engaged in child-connected work are supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

Staff are monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. This is done

through a six monthly probationary review, regular performance reviews, completion of annual mandatory reporting training and refresher child safety training. Child safety and wellbeing is also a regular agenda item for staff meetings at all levels of the School.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our school policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing is paramount.

Suitability of volunteers

All volunteers are required to comply with our Volunteers Policy which describes how we assess the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing induction and training, and supervision and management.

When volunteers are engaged to work with, near children and/or perform child-related work, we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching registration.
- collect and record:
 - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
 - the person's history of working with children
 - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

Volunteers sign a declaration that they have read the policies noted under the 'Staff Induction ' heading of this document before commencing any work at CGGS.

Child Safety knowledge, skills and awareness

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our staff will participate in a range of ongoing training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- Our school's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices.
- Completing the [Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#) online module annually.
- Recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children, students or adults.
- Responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm.
- How to build culturally safe environments for children and students.
- Information sharing and recordkeeping obligations.
- How to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment.

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing, will be delivered for our volunteers and will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities in child connected work.

School Council training and education

To ensure our School Council is equipped with the knowledge required to make decisions in the best interests of student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment, the council is trained at least annually. Training includes guidance on:

- Individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse.
- Child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment.
- CGGS child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes of conduct and practices.
- Discussion of scenarios-based or issues that arise.

School Council members sign a declaration that they have read the Child Safety Code of Conduct.

Complaints and Reporting processes

CGGS fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school community to raise concerns and complaints. The intent is to reduce misconduct or abuse occurring or for it to remain hidden.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our school's Complaints Management Policy. The Complaints Management Policy – School Community can be found on our school website.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including School Council, employees and homestay providers) must follow our Child Safety Response and Reporting Policy. Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school.

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, we will ensure our school follows:

- The [Four Critical Actions](#) for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child (**Appendix 1**)
- The [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending (**Appendix 2**)

Our Student Welfare and Safety Policy (which includes Bullying and Prevention) and our Complaints Management Policy covers complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

Communications

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

- ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on our website including the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document), School Community Code of Conduct (includes Child Safety) and the Child Safety Response and Reporting Policy.
- displaying 'Speak Up – it's your Right' and Child Safety Officer posters around the school.
- updates in our school newsletters.

having child safety as a regular agenda item at School Council meetings, school leadership meetings and staff meetings.

Privacy and Information Sharing

The School collects, uses, and discloses where necessary information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws. For information on how our school collects, uses and discloses information. Refer to our Privacy Policy on the school's website.

Records Management

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and we manage our records in accordance with our Records Management Policy.

Review of child safety practices

At CGGS, we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

- review and improve our policy every 2 years as required or after any significant child safety incident.
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice.
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community.
- inform the school community of any child safety policy changes were relevant or applicable.
- use surveys, focus groups and discussions to review the accessibility and level of awareness of child safe policies and procedures by students, families, staff and volunteers.

Communication of the Policy

The school publishes its Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy on the School website, in its staff handbook and on myCGGS. Parents can also access the Policy via Parent Lounge.

Related Policies

- Student Welfare and Safety Policy
- Child Safety Response and Reporting Policy
- Volunteer Policy
- Working With Children Policy
- Complaints Management Policy – Staff
- Complaints Management Policy – School Community
- Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Records Management Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Statement
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Student Code of Conduct (Junior School – Ormiston)
- Student Code of Conduct (Secondary School)
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Parent Code of Conduct

Links to other related Documents

- [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- [Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools](#)

Legislative Requirements

- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Children Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
- Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) including the Australian Privacy Principles
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) including the Victorian Information Privacy Principles

Standards and Guidelines

- Ministerial Order No 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises
- Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme Ministerial Guidelines
- Child Information Sharing Scheme Ministerial Guidelines

Policy Review

The School is committed to the continuous improvement of its Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

Unless otherwise stated, this policy remains in place until it is superseded by an amended version. This policy will be reviewed every two years or more often as circumstances require. Next scheduled review date is May 2026.

Version Control

Version No.	Date Approved	Author	Comments
1.0	19.7.2022	Risk and Compliance Manager	Initial version.
1.1	15.12.2022	Risk and Compliance Manager	Updated to reflect school restructure
1.3	May 2024	Risk and Compliance Manager	Added 'Definitions' section. Refreshed as part of review cycle.

Appendix 1

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

As a school staff member, you play a **critical role** in protecting children in your care.

- You **must** act, by following the Four Critical Actions, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief* that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.
- You **must** act if you form a suspicion/ reasonable belief, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).
- It is strongly recommended that you use the **Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template** to keep clear and comprehensive notes, even if you make a decision not to report.

*A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

1 RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to **Action 2**.

If a child is at immediate risk of harm you **must** ensure their safety by:

- separating alleged victims and others involved
- administering first aid
- calling **000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance** to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
- identifying a contact person at the school for future liaison with Police.

Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES / REFERRING TO SERVICES

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you **must** report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

Q: Where does the source of suspected abuse come from?

WITHIN THE SCHOOL

VICTORIA POLICE
You **must** report all instances of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor, volunteer or visitor to Victoria Police.

You **must** also report internally to:

- GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or leadership team
 - Employee Conduct Branch
 - DET Incident Support and Operations Centre
- CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or leadership team
 - Diocesan education office.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

School principal and/or school chairperson
Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978**.

All allegations of 'reportable conduct' **must** be reported as soon as possible to:

- GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**
 - Employee Conduct Branch
- CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
 - Diocesan education office
- INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**
 - Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978**.

WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION
You **must** report to DHHS Child Protection if a child is considered to be:

- in need of protection from child abuse
- at risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.

VICTORIA POLICE

You **must** also report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police.

You **must** also report internally to:

- GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or leadership team
 - DET Incident Support and Operations Centre
- CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or leadership team
 - Diocesan education office.
- INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**
 - School principal and/or chairperson.

For suspected student sexual assault, please follow the **Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending**.

OTHER CONCERNS

If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse but you still hold **significant concerns** for their wellbeing you **must** still act. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from:

- Child FIRST/The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support)
- DHHS Child Protection
- Victoria Police.

3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

Your principal **must** consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:

- not to contact the parents/carers** (e.g. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parent/carer to be contacted)
- to contact the parents/carers** and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion)
- how to communicate** with all relevant parties with consideration for their safety.

4 PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Your school **must** provide support for children impacted by abuse. This should include the development of a **Student Support Plan** in consultation with wellbeing professionals. This is an essential part of your duty of care requirements. Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals and support.

You **must** follow the **Four Critical Actions** every time you become aware of a further incident or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.



CONTACT

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION AREA
North Division **1300 664 977**
South Division **1300 655 795**
East Division **1300 360 391**
West Division (Rural) **1800 075 599**
West Division (Metro) **1300 664 977**

AFTER HOURS
After hours, weekends, public holidays **13 12 78**

CHILD FIRST
<https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/>
referral-and-support-teams

ORANGE DOOR
<https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/the-orange-door/html>

VICTORIA POLICE
000 or your local police station

DET INCIDENT SUPPORT AND OPERATIONS CENTRE
1800 126 126

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT UNIT
1800 126 126

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH
(03) 9637 2595

DIOCESAN OFFICE
Melbourne **(03) 9267 0228**
Ballarat **(03) 5337 7135**
Sale **(03) 5622 6600**
Sandhurst **(03) 5443 2377**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA
(03) 9825 7200

THE LOOKOUT
The LOOKOUT has a service directory, information, and evidence based guidance to help you respond to family violence: <http://www.lookout.org.au>
Family violence victims/survivors can be referred to **1800 Respect** for counselling, information and a referral service: **1800 737 732**.



Appendix 2

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Responding to Student Sexual Offending

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

As a school staff member, you play a **critical role** in protecting children in your care.

- You **must** act by following the 4 critical actions as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a suspicion that a student is a victim of a student sexual offending and/or a student has engaged in sexual offending.
- You **must** act even if you are unsure and have not directly observed student sexual offending (e.g. if a victim, or another person tells you about the offence)
- You **must** use the **Responding to Student Sexual Offending template** to keep clear and comprehensive notes.



1 IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO AN INCIDENT

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to **Action 2**.

If a child is at immediate risk of harm you **must** ensure their safety by:

- separating alleged victims and others involved
- administering first aid
- calling **000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance** to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
- identifying a contact person at the school for future liaison with Police.

Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you **must** report incidents, suspicions and disclosures of student sexual offending as soon as possible:

VICTORIA POLICE

All instances on **000**

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

If you believe that:

- the victim's parent/carers are unable or unwilling to protect the child
- the student who is alleged to have engaged in the student sexual offending is:
 - aged over 10 and under 15 years and may be in need of therapeutic treatment to address these behaviours
 - may be displaying physical and behavioural indicators of being the 'victim of child abuse'.

INTERNALLY

ALSO report internally to:

- School Principal and/or leadership team** (all instances)
- Government Schools:**
 - DET Security Services Unit
- Catholic Schools:**
 - Diocesan education office

You **must** identify a contact person at the school for future liaison with Victoria Police and/or Child Protection and seek advice about contacting parents/carers (see **Action 3**).

*See the **Four Critical Steps for Schools: Responding Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse** for further guidance in these circumstances.

3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

Your Principal **must** consult with **Victoria Police** or **DHHS Child Protection** to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers of all impacted students. They may advise:

- not to contact the parents/carers** (e.g. in circumstances where contacting the parents/carers is likely to adversely affect a **Victoria Police** investigation or where the student is a mature minor and has requested that their parent/carer not be notified)
- to contact the parents/carers** and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion).

4 PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Your school **must** provide support for students who are victim to a student sexual offence AND students who have engaged in a sexual offence. This is an essential part of your duty of care requirements. This support should include the development of a **Student Support Plan** in consultation with wellbeing professionals, outlining support strategies. Strategies may include the development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals.



CONTACT

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CHILD FIRST
www.dhs.vic.gov.au

VICTORIA POLICE
000 or contact your local police station

DET SECURITY SERVICES UNIT
(03) 9589 6266

STUDENT INCIDENT AND RECOVERY UNIT
(03) 9651 3622

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH
(03) 9637 2595

DIOCESAN OFFICE
Melbourne **(03) 9267 0228**
Ballarat **(03) 5337 7135**
Sale **(03) 5622 6600**
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