

CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children in our school setting is our highest priority. In response to the Betrayal of Trust Parliamentary Enquiry, the Victorian Government has introduced Child Safe Standards across all organisations in the community where children spend time. The new standards support the work that Principals and Teachers do to protect all students from abuse and neglect. (Source: [DET Child Safety](#) and Department of Education and Training Secretary Gill Callister).

Aims

This Policy

- sets out Gisborne Secondary College's (GSC) approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe,
- provides the policy framework for our approach to the Department of Education and Training (DET) Child Safe Standards [DET Child Safe Standards](#) to build a stronger and more consistent approach to preventing and responding to child abuse, and
- embeds the Child Safe culture and practices, including the GSC Statement of Commitment to Child Safety (refer to Appendix A) and the GSC Child Safety Code of Conduct (Appendix B), into our school.

Implementation

Scope

- This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors and whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people.
- The policy applies across a range of school forums (e.g. camps, online) and outside of school hours.
- Partner organisations (including parent volunteers) will be made aware of the policy and the school's underlying philosophy towards the care of children.

Definitions

Ministerial Order 870 provides definitions, including:

Child abuse

Child abuse includes:

- any act committed against a child involving:
 - a sexual offence or
 - an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
 - physical violence or
 - serious emotional or psychological harm
 - serious neglect of a child.
- the infliction, on a child, of:
 - physical violence or
 - serious emotional or psychological harm
 - serious neglect of a child.

Child-connected work

Child-connected work means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child safety

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.

School environment

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

School staff

School staff being any individual working in a school environment who is:

- directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority;
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary); or
- a minister of religion.

A Child-safe Culture

• This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants at Gisborne Secondary College (GSC). 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 school's culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.
- This policy includes the Gisborne Secondary College Statement of Commitment to Child Safety (Appendix A) and the Gisborne Secondary College Child Safety Code of Conduct (Appendix B).
 - It guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation.
 - All of our staff and volunteers will be made aware of our code of conduct, which specifies the standards of behaviour required when working with children.
- We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Personnel Understand their Roles and Responsibilities

- The school's Child Safety Code of Conduct sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.
- School leaders and managers will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and the behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's Code of Conduct.
- For more information, consult the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct (Appendix B)

Human Resources Practices and Training

- We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.
- We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal people, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds 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. Please see the Working with Children Check website www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au and the Gisborne Secondary College Working with Children Check Policy for further information.
- We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision making process.
- If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.
- We will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect.

Reporting a Child Safety Concern or Complaint

- The school has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection.
- Reporting requirements are detailed in the GSC Child Protection Reporting Policy.

- Immediate action should include reporting their concerns to the Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection or another appropriate agency and notifying the Principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns. The school will take action to respond to a complaint.

Legal Responsibilities to Report

We take 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 have an obligation to report that information to the police

- A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed.
- Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+d+isclose+offence) www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+d+isclose+offence

Failure to protect

- People of authority in our organisation 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.
- Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+p+rotect+offence) www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+p+rotect+offence

- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

- Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), Principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable

grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

- For more information about making a mandatory or protective report, refer to the Screen

shot of the Four Critical Actions for Schools – Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse in Appendix C,

www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf, also located in faculties and on our website.

Listening to children

- The school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/carers. We encourage child and parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs safe school

operations and builds the capability of children and parents/carers to understand their rights and their responsibilities.

- When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct with, or abuse of, a child the school will listen to the complainant's account of things and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (or their parents/carers if appropriate under the circumstances) informed about progress.

Risk Reduction and Management

- The school believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes.
- The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.
- The school's risk management strategies are reviewed annually.

Confidentiality and Privacy

- This school collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law. The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the WSC Privacy Policy.
- All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, 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.

Policy Review

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school community.

Related Legislation and Policies

- [Ministerial Order No. 870](#)
- [Dept. of Justice and Regulation Betrayal of Trust](#)
- [Dept. Justice WWC checks](#)
- [DET Child Safe Standards](#)
- [DET Four Critical Actions...Child Abuse](#) (Appendix C)
- GSC Child Protection Reporting Policy
- GSC Statement of Commitment to Child Safety (Appendix A)
- GSC Child Safety Code of Conduct (Appendix B)
- GSC Working with Children Checks Policy

- GSC Privacy Policy
- GSC Camps Policy
- GSC Day Excursions Policy
- GSC Duty of Care Policy
- GSC External Providers Policy
- GSC ICT Acceptable Use Policy Procedures and Agreement
- GSC Visitors and Volunteers Policy

Appendices

- Appendix A: GSC Statement of Commitment to Child Safety
- Appendix B: GSC Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Appendix C: Screen shot of the Four Critical Actions for Schools – Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's annual review cycle.

This Policy was last ratified by School Council in: 201