

# Child Safe Policy



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## *Purpose*

Good Shepherd Lutheran Primary School's Child Safe Policy demonstrates the School's strong commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of the School's approach to implementing Ministerial Order 1359, which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

This policy informs the school community of our collective and individual obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children. It also guides the School's processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

## *Scope*

The School's Child Safe Policy applies to all adults in the school community, including:

- Staff
- Volunteers
- Contractors
- Visitors

This policy applies in all physical, virtual and online School environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including all locations provided for a student's use (for example; school grounds, sporting events, camps and excursions and environments provided by External Education Providers and other Contractors).

This policy should be read in conjunction with our other child safety policies, procedures and codes (please refer to the 'Related Documents' section below).

## *Definitions*

Definitions of the following terms used in the Child Safe Policy can be found in **Child Safe Program Definitions**:

- child
- child abuse and other harm
- child safety and wellbeing
- child safety incident or concern
- child-connected work
- child-related work
- contractor
- school environment
- school staff

- school governing authority
- student
- visitor
- volunteer

### ***Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing***

Good Shepherd Lutheran Primary School is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children and their families. We are committed to providing a child friendly environment where our students are safe and feel safe. We are committed to creating a safe place for students where their participation is valued, their views respected and their voices are heard.

The School has no tolerance for child abuse and proactively takes steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environment.

The School promotes positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

The School regards its child safety responsibilities with the utmost importance and is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child safety and wellbeing laws and regulations and maintaining a child safe culture. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

The School's child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children, regardless of background, culture, identity, disability or other characteristics that may make a child vulnerable. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics is not tolerated at our School, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate action taken.

Each member of the School community has a responsibility to understand the important role they play individually and collectively, to ensure the wellbeing and safety of all students.

Good Shepherd is committed to regularly reviewing its child safe practices, and seeking input from students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

### ***Roles and Responsibilities***

Child safety and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility. All adults in the school community have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety, wellbeing and protection of students.

Specific responsibilities include:

#### **School Board**

The Good Shepherd Lutheran Primary School Board is the School's governing authority for the purposes of Ministerial Order 1359.

The School Board is responsible for:

- championing and promoting a child safe culture within the School community
- approving the School's Child Safe Policy and the Child Safety Codes of Conduct
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at School Board meetings
- undertaking annual training on child safety

- acting in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to School Board Directors
- ensuring that the School has appropriate resources to effectively implement the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 1359

## **Principal**

The Principal is responsible, and will be accountable for, the operational management of the School, and the implementation of the Child Safe Program.

The Principal will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed
- model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students
- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the school community including at Leadership Team Meetings, Staff Meetings and School Board Meetings
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and how to respond to suspicions or disclosures of abuse
- create 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.

## **School Executive Team**

The School Executive Team (comprising the Principal, Assistant Principals and Director of Business Services) is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and for supporting the Principal in meeting his/her responsibilities.

## **Child Safe Officers**

The School has nominated three Child Safe Officers to champion child safety within the School and assist in coordinating responses to child safety incidents. The Child Safe Officers are the first point of contact for raising child safety concerns within the School.

The Child Safe Officers are responsible for:

- promoting child safety and wellbeing within the School community
- informing the school community about the Child Safe Policy, and making it publicly available
- implementing the School's child safety policies and procedures
- promoting a culture of listening to students and families and acting on their child safety concerns
- being the first point of contact for child safety concerns for staff, volunteers and students

- providing guidance to students, staff and volunteers on child safety policies and procedures
- working with School leadership to respond to child safety incidents
- providing child safety induction programs for new school staff, volunteers and School Board Directors
- providing child safety training for school staff, volunteers and School Board Directors
- ensuring mandatory reporters complete the annual mandatory reporting training
- providing child safety updates and information to staff and volunteers, as needed

### Child Safe Committee

The School has a Child Safe Committee that meets regularly to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing.

### Staff

All Staff are required to comply with the School's Child Safe Policy and Child Safety Codes of Conduct. They are required to be familiar with the School's Child Safe Program and understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse and other harm.

It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key indicators of child abuse and other harm, to be observant, and to raise all child safety incidents and concerns with one of the School's Child Safe Officers.

To meet these obligations, all Staff must:

- participate in the child safety and wellbeing induction and ongoing training provided by the School
- always follow the School's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures in the Child Safe Program
- act in accordance with the Child Safety Codes of Conduct
- identify and raise child safety incidents and concerns in accordance with our procedures for **Responding to Child Safety Incidents and Reporting**, and follow the **PROTECT Four Critical Actions and Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending**
- ensure students views are taken seriously and their voices are heard when making decisions that affect them
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

### Volunteers

All Volunteers at the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of students in the School environment.

To meet these obligations:

- all Volunteers must comply with the School's Child Safe Policy and Child Safety Codes of Conduct
- Direct Contact Volunteers (and, if required by the School, other Volunteers) must:

- participate in the child safety and wellbeing induction and ongoing training provided by the School
- be aware of key indicators of child abuse and other harm
- understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse and other harm
- raise all child safety concerns with one of the School's Child Safe Officers

## **Contractors**

Contractors may include maintenance and building personnel, consultants, music tutors, sports coaches, and cleaners as well as external education providers (organisations that the School has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the School).

All Contractors are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of students in the School environment.

To meet these obligations:

- all Contractors must comply with the School's Child Safe Policy and Child Safety Codes of Conduct
- Direct Contact Contractors (and, if required by the School, other Contractors) must:
  - participate in the child safety and wellbeing induction and ongoing training provided by the School
  - be aware of key indicators of child abuse and other harm
  - understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse and other harm
  - raise all child safety concerns with one of the School's Child Safe Officers.

The School may include these requirements in the written agreement between it and the Contractor.

## ***Child Safety Codes of Conduct***

The School's Child Safety Codes of Conduct include a **Child Safety Code of Conduct** and a **Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy**. Together, they set boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults in the School community and students, including in physical, online and virtual environments.

The School also has a **Student Child Safety Code of Conduct**, which includes standards of behaviour for students relevant to child safety and wellbeing.

The School's Child Safe Program includes clear processes to report inappropriate behaviour. The School publishes our Child Safety Codes of Conduct on our public website so that everyone can easily find out what behaviours are acceptable and unacceptable at our School and how to report inappropriate behaviour.

## *Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing*

At our School we identify, assess and manage 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 registers, such as those developed for off-site overnight camps, 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 School Board will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

## *Student Empowerment*

To support child safety and wellbeing at Good Shepherd, 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. This is achieved through implementing our whole school approach to respectful relationships, our Student Child Safety Code of Conduct and our school values and culture.

We inform students of their rights and give them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and 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 feeling 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 following the procedures for **Responding to Child Safety Incidents and Reporting** included in the Child Safe Program.

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, check our understanding of the complaint, support the student and keep them (and their parents and carers) informed about progress, as appropriate.

The specific strategies that we have adopted to promote the participation of and empowerment of students, and to implement all of the above obligations, are set out in the **Participation and Empowerment of Students** section of the Child Safe Program.

## *Family Engagement*

The School recognises that parents and carers have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their children. Accordingly, the School believes that 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, the School is committed to providing families 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.

The specific strategies that we have adopted to promote the engagement of families in child safety and wellbeing at the School, are set out in the **Family and Community Involvement** section of our Child Safety Program.

### ***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 in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies to the needs of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children with disabilities
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- children who identify as LGBTIQ+

Our **Student Diversity and Inclusion Policy** provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

### ***Cultural Safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students***

At Good Shepherd Lutheran Primary School, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, we recognise the link between culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, their families and their communities to have a voice and presence in our School's planning, policies, and activities.

The specific strategies that we have adopted to promote cultural safety in our School community are set out in the **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students** section of our Child Safe Program.

### ***Suitable Staff and Volunteers***

At Good Shepherd, 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.

#### **Recruitment and Screening**

The School follows strict practices in the recruitment and screening of staff, to ensure only suitable and appropriate people are engaged to work with our students.

When engaging staff to 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 (Drivers Licence or Passport)
- any professional or other qualifications (Academic Transcript, etc)
- the person's history of working with children
- references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

### **New Staff Induction**

All newly appointed staff are expected to participate in a New Staff Induction, which includes an induction on the School's Child Safe Program. The Induction focuses on:

- the Child Safe Policy (this document),
- the Child Safety Codes of Conduct,
- the procedures for **Responding to Child Safety Incidents and Reporting** (including Mandatory Reporting obligations), and
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

### **Ongoing supervision and management of staff**

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

Staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. This will be done through regular performance reviews and observations by their manager.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children 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 the School's **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.

### ***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 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
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children
- 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.

Staff will also be required to complete the **Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting** online module annually.

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing, for example, training for volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities.

### **School Board Training**

To ensure the School Board 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 Board 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
- the School's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes of conduct and practices

### **Complaints and Reporting Processes**

The School fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

The School has clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding to complaints and concerns. This is documented in our School's **Managing Complaints and Grievances Policy** which can be found on the School's website.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including School Board Directors) must follow the School's procedures for **Responding to Child Safety Incidents and Reporting**. Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a 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 the school follows:

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

### **Communications**

The School 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 (and Parent FLOREO) including the Child Safe Policy (this document), Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the procedures for **Responding to Child Safety Incidents and Reporting**.
- displaying PROTECT posters around the School
- updates in our school newsletter

- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at Leadership Team Meetings, Staff Meetings and School Board Meetings.

### ***Privacy and Information Sharing***

The School collects, uses and discloses information about students and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws and other relevant laws, including laws that permit the School to disclose information about child safety and wellbeing to external people and agencies. For information about how the School collects, uses and discloses this information, refer to our **Privacy Policy**.

### ***Child Safety Record Keeping***

The School is committed to best practice record keeping about child safety incidents and concerns.

The School records all internal and external reports of child safety incidents and concerns, as well as any other responses by the School using **PROTECT Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse - A Template for Victorian Schools**.

When keeping records of child safety incidents or concerns, the School maintains confidentiality and privacy for students and families in accordance with federal and state privacy legislation.

### ***Child Safe Program and Practice Review***

Good Shepherd Lutheran Primary School is committed to the continuous improvement of the policies and procedures included in our Child Safe Program and of our child safety and wellbeing practices. The Program as a whole is reviewed annually (or earlier if a significant child safety incident occurs at the School or legislation changes) for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child safety and wellbeing related laws, regulations and standards.

When undertaking these reviews, the School:

- incorporates feedback from students, families, staff and volunteers
- analyses any complaints and child safety incidents that may have occurred
- acts with transparency and shares pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community

### ***Related Policies and Procedures***

This Child Safe Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related school policies, procedures, and codes. These include our:

- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy
- Procedures for Responding to Child Safety Incidents and Reporting
- Managing Complaints and Grievances Policy
- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Privacy Policy

### ***Review***

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years, or as required by legislation.

### ***Approval***

<b>Created date</b>	1 July 2022
<b>Endorsed by</b>	Good Shepherd Lutheran Primary School Board
<b>Endorsed on</b>	21 July 2022
<b>Next review date</b>	1 July 2024

