

Child Safe Policy

Goulburn Valley Grammar School has developed the following Child Safe Policy. This Policy is an overarching document that provides key elements of our approach to protecting children from abuse.

The Policy forms the foundation of the School's procedures, practices, decision-making processes and ultimately the School's culture with respect to child safety.

It is designed to be published on our public website and Agora (LMS). As well as communicated through induction and welcome packs for Board of Directors, Staff and Volunteers.

The School's Child Safe Policy has been approved and endorsed by the School's Board of Directors.

Our Child Safe Policy

Objectives

This policy provides the framework for:

- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child protection within the School
- the creation of a positive and robust child protection culture
- the promotion and open discussion of child protection issues within the School
- compliance with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection in Victoria.

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Goulburn Valley Grammar School is committed to providing a child safe and child friendly environment, where children and young people are and feel safe and are able to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.

At Goulburn Valley Grammar School we have a zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The School regards its child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our school environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously, responding promptly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our School and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in the School has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety. We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices and seeking input from our students, families, staff, alumni and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

Child Safe Values and Principles

The School's commitment to child safety is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse.

- All children have the right to be safe.
- The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
- The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected.
- Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Safe Code of Conduct and Staff Code of Conduct.
- The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.
- Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our school community.
- Procedures are in place to screen all staff, Direct Contact Volunteers**, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers who have direct contact with children.
- Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
- Child protection training is mandatory for all Board of Directors, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers.
- Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the school community.
- Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

**Direct Contact Volunteers are those volunteers who are involved in providing support, guidance and supervision directly to students and could potentially have direct contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service. Examples of Direct Contact Volunteer activities may include volunteers involved in School camps and excursions, coaching sporting teams or assisting in learning activities.

The Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic) defines "direct contact" as any contact between a person and a child (aged under 18) that involves:

- physical contact;
- face to face contact;
- contact by post or other written communication;
- contact by telephone or other oral communication; or
- contact by email or other electronic communication

Child Protection Programme

Goulburn Valley Grammar School is committed to the effective implementation of our Child Protection Programme and ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated. We adopt a risk management approach by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety risks based on a range of factors including the nature of our School's activities, physical and online environments and the characteristics of the student body.

Our Child Protection Programme relates to all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse.

It includes:

- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and associated key risk indicators
- clear procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse
- strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, parents/carers and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child protection matters
- procedures for recruiting and screening Board of Directors, staff, Direct Contact Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers
- procedures for reporting reportable conduct and/or misconduct
- pastoral care strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe

- policies with respect to cultural diversity and students with disabilities
- a child protection training programme
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children
- support or assistance for children who disclose child abuse or who are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse. Staff will be guided by the Australian Government 'Responding to children and young people's disclosure of abuse' document which focuses on Listen, Reassure and Respect. (appendix1.1) School support services, for example; counselling or psychologist services will be made available to the child. Staff are required to take thorough notes of any disclosure, report to Senior Leadership and complete and securely file appropriate documentation.
- guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality
- policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Victorian Child Safe Standards)
- a system for continuous review and improvement.

As a part of Goulburn Valley Grammar School's induction process, all staff and Direct Contact Volunteers are required to complete a selection of training modules on the content of our Child Protection Programme. Additional, ongoing child protection training is provided at least annually.

Culturally safe environment

At Goulburn Valley Grammar School we are committed to providing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected. We actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our school community.

We recognise that Aboriginal children and their families need their culture and identity acknowledged and valued. It is the right of every Aboriginal child to be immersed in their culture.

The School undertakes a number of actions to support cultural inclusion which includes;

- establishment of an Aboriginal Student Support Group that meets regularly
- engagement with new students and parents on a regular basis
- engagement with the Aboriginal community
- celebrate and raise awareness within the school community of Aboriginal culture and heritage

The School is committed to respecting and valuing Aboriginal children by taking actions to ensure;

- staff and volunteers encourage and support children to express and enjoy their culture
- staff and volunteers actively support and facilitate participation and inclusion within the School
- there is a zero tolerance towards racism and any complaints of racism are taken seriously with the expectation that staff and volunteers will act upon any incidents of racism
- the School's leadership takes responsibility to equip students, staff, volunteers and the school community, to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and to understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children.

Online safe environment

The School recognises the importance of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in preparing students for the world around them and believes ICT is an integral part of the curriculum. We believe that a programme linked specifically to the School Values is important to ensure our students are confident, effective and safe when using technology.

As an eSmart school we will actively promote Cybersafety in our school community and provide learning experiences that promote safe and responsible online behaviours in partnership with parents/guardians.

The School has the following policies related to an online safe environment:

- Cybersafety Policy - available to all staff, students and parents via Agora (LMS)
- ICT Acceptable Use Protocol for students – this document provides guidelines for the use of resources and to maintain a cyersafety culture
- ICT Acceptable Use Agreement – this student and parent agreement includes actions which determine the safety of the school environment

Student empowerment

To support child safety and wellbeing at the School, 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 our School Values, implementing our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships and our Code of Conduct.

We inform students of their rights through our whole school approach to teaching Resilience, Rights, Responsibilities and Respectful Relationships curriculum and Child Safety curriculum content. We aim to provide students with the knowledge, 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.

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 as appropriate) informed about progress.

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 the School is committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our School's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

The School welcomes community participation and values its input. Student safety and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility. To this end, the School seeks input from key members of the GVGS community, including staff, students, school families and alumni, around its relevant student safety policies.

Members of the school community are encouraged to raise issues, give feedback and or ideas for improvement. School community feedback is sought as well as alumni contacted, regarding relevant policies to seek their input and comments.

The School will do this by;

- taking seriously the feedback and involvement of the school community
- creating opportunities for the school community to provide feedback on the School's policies, procedures and practices including the School's approach to child safety and wellbeing
- making available on Agora for students and parents, the School's child safety policies and procedures. In addition, relevant documents will be included on the School's website.
- informing families and the school community about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety
- displaying Child safety posters throughout the School

Diversity and equity

The School celebrates the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promotes respectful environments that are free from discrimination. We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

In recognising the School's range of diverse students and family attributes, we pay particular attention to;

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

Our Student Wellbeing Policy provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity at Goulburn Valley Grammar School.

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
- completing the Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations online module annually
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
- 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, for example, training for our volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

Responsibilities

Child protection is everyone's responsibility. At Goulburn Valley Grammar School, the Board of Directors and staff, as well as Volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. Specific responsibilities include:

- **Board of Directors**

Each director of the Board of Directors is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the School's Child Safe Policy and the Child Protection Programme to be effectively implemented within the School and are responsible for holding the Principal and the School's Leadership Team accountable for effective implementation.

In addition, the Board of Directors will also;

- promote a child safe culture with the school community
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at Board meetings
- undertake annual training on child safety
- approve updates to and act in accordance with, the School's Child Safety Code of Conduct, to the extent that it applies to Board of Directors

- **The Principal**

The Principal is responsible and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that the Child Safe Policy and the School's Child Protection Programme is implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child protection culture is maintained within the School.

- **The School's Child Safety Officers**

A number of staff members have been nominated as the School's Child Safety Officers. Our Child Safety Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child protection issues. They are the first point of contact for raising child protection concerns within the School. They are also responsible for championing child protection within the School and assisting in coordinating responses to child protection incidents.

- **Staff Members**

All staff are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Safe Policy and our Child Protection Programme and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the School's Child Safety Officers.

- **Direct Contact Volunteers**

All Direct Contact Volunteers, as defined in this policy, are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection Programme, particularly this Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct, and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse, through reading and acknowledging the Protect Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations training information.

It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the School's Child Safety Officers.

- **Indirect Contact Volunteers**

Indirect Contact Volunteers are those volunteers who are involved in providing support and services whilst not directly assisting a specific group of students. All Indirect Contact Volunteers are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment.

All Indirect Contact Volunteers are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct. Examples of Indirect Contact Volunteer activities may include assisting with School administrative functions.

- **Third Party Contractors**

All Third Party Contractors engaged by the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment. Third Party Contractors include, for example, maintenance and building personnel, consultants, casual teachers, tutors, sports coaches and external cleaners. This also includes music teachers and other co-curricular teachers and instructors who are engaged by students and their families directly, rather than the School, but have an agreement with the School to use the School's facilities.

All Third Party Contractors engaged by the School are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct. The School may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the Third Party Contractor.

- **External Education Providers**

An External Education Provider is any organisation 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. The delivery of such a course may take place on School premises or elsewhere.

All External Education Providers engaged by the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment. All External Education Providers engaged by the School are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct. The School may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the External Education Provider.

Reporting Child Abuse Concerns

Our Child Protection Programme provides detailed guidance for the Board of Directors, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers as to how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to one of our School's nominated Child Safety Officers. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.

Staff, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, Volunteers, students, parents/carers and other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse or grooming are asked to contact the School's Senior Child Safety Officer, Ms Trish Lawless, by phoning 5833 3300 or emailing Trish.Lawless@gvgs.vic.edu.au.

Communications will be treated confidentially on a "need to know basis".

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.

Records Management

The School will create, maintain and dispose of records relevant to child safety and wellbeing in accordance with Public Record Office Victoria Standards.

The School will:

- Maintain records relevant to child safety and wellbeing and keep them organised in a way that ensures they are searchable and retrievable.
- Store child safety and wellbeing records securely, protected from unauthorised access.
- Retain student safety and wellbeing records for a minimum of 75 years.
- Retain all records documenting the reporting and investigation of sexual abuse incidents, allegations and disclosures for a minimum of 99 years.
- Retain screening records for school staff applicants, such as WWCC in accordance with the School Records Retention Guide <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/records-management/guidance/permanent-and-long-term-temporary-records>

Policy and Programme Review

Goulburn Valley Grammar School is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Protection Programme. We have established processes for the review for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child protection related laws, regulations and standards.

The School will;

- review this policy every 2 years 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

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