



Child Safety Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

Shepparton Christian College is committed to child safety. All children at Shepparton Christian College should be safe, happy and empowered in regards to their own safety. We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures. Shepparton Christian College is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

2. AIMS

This policy seeks to put clear framework and direction around issues relating to child safety. The following aspects are covered by this policy

- Shepparton Christian College is committed to child safety and has a zero tolerance of child abuse. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- Shepparton Christian College is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- Shepparton Christian College has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- Shepparton Christian College is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.
- We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

NOTE: this policy applies to all staff, volunteers and contractors of Shepparton Christian College. As much as is reasonably practical, it applies to all adults who come into contact with students of Shepparton Christian College in the course of College activities.

3. BACKGROUND

Child Safety is of the upmost importance at Shepparton Christian College.

This policy was created in response to Ministerial Order 870 which mandates that all schools meet particular standards in relation to child safety. These standards were developed by the government in response to the Betrayal of Trust inquiry and the current Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Please also refer to the Child Safe Reporting Obligations Policy (which includes Mandatory Reporting), the Child Safe Code of Conduct and the Child Safe Strategies document.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

Child Safe Code of Conduct

- All staff, contractors and volunteers will abide by the Shepparton Christian College Child Safe Code of Conduct.

Training and supervision

- Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.
- We train our staff to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.
- We support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse.
- New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to this organisation's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further).
- Any inappropriate behaviour from adults working with children will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (formerly Department of Health and Human Services), the Commission for Children and Young People and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

- When employing new staff, all reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that staff are both skilled for the role for which they are being employed and can clearly demonstrate a commitment to child safety.
- All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check (WWCC) and to provide evidence of this. Teaching staff must have a valid Victorian Institute of Teaching registration in place of a WWCC.
- We carry out reference checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. This includes a question about any concerns in regards to the applications suitability to work with young people.

Fair procedures for personnel

- The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.
- We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.
- If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised which involves staff members, contractors or volunteers, where the offender is not a family member, and circumstances permit, we provide updates to families on any actions we take as an organisation.
- In line with mandated requirements, any incident that meets the threshold defined by the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP), will be reported as part of the Reportable Conduct Scheme. If in doubt, the CCYP will be contacted for advice on what to do.
- In line with mandated requirements, any incident that meets the threshold defined by the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP), will be investigated as per the recommendations and guidelines of the CCYP. If in doubt, the CCYP will be contacted for advice on what to do.

Privacy

- 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.

Legislative responsibilities

Our organisation takes 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.
- **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.
- **Reportable Conduct Scheme:** requires schools to respond to allegations of child abuse (and other child-related misconduct) made against their workers and volunteers, and to notify the Commission for Children and Young People of any allegations
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

Risk management

- In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

- We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media). Our risk management strategies include:
 - An active OHS committee
 - Human resource practices that include checking staff for VIT registration and WWC checks
 - A staff code of conduct that includes child safe standards
 - Regular staff training in the area of child safety and protective behaviours
 - Practices around building design that includes doors that can be opened from the inside when locked, windows in doors of offices and classrooms and strategically placed windows in classrooms and meeting spaces that maximise visibility.
 - Risk assessment forms for all camps and excursions that include an evaluation of risks associated with child abuse.
- A child safe risk register is in place and will be review regularly by the College Board, and not less than once per year.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

- Shepparton Christian College takes all allegations of child abuse seriously. Where appropriate, allegations will be referred to the appropriate authorities as soon as practical. In all circumstances, allegations will be reviewed by the Principal and if not referred to government authorities, allegations will be investigated by the Principal or delegate thoroughly and quickly. Where required, an external investigator will be engaged to ensure impartiality.
- Where appropriate, allegations of inappropriate behaviour towards a young person, will be reported to the Commission for Children and Young People in line with the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
- All children, families, volunteers and staff are encouraged to report concerns to the Principal, Assistant Principal or the Primary or Secondary Coordinator. They may also report concerns through the College Counsellor, Chaplain or other staff.
- We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place.
- If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred, then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:
 - a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
 - behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
 - someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
 - observing suspicious behaviour.
- Where allegations of abuse are made, in consultation with families, referrals to appropriate support for the possible victim may occur. The appropriate support may include, but is not limited to, the College Counsellor, College Chaplain, Church Pastor, external professional counsellor/psychologists or other support organisation.

5. EVALUATION/REVIEW

- This policy will be reviewed every three years and following significant incidents if they occur.
- The Child Safe Code of Conduct will be reviewed at the same time as this policy
- The Child Safe Strategies document will be reviewed at the same time as this policy

In developing the above policy the School Board has aligned these procedures to the Vision and Mission Statements where Biblical philosophies have been the underlying theme.

This policy was adopted at School Board – (September 2021)