



# CHILD SAFETY POLICY

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## Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact the school office on 5831 7790.

## 1. PURPOSE

The Shepparton Christian College Child Safety Policy demonstrates our school's 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 our school's approach to implementing [Ministerial Order 1359](#) (PDF, 363KB), 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 and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

## 2. SCOPE

This policy:

- applies to all school staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to school board members where indicated.
- applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided for a student's use (for example, a school camp), and those provided through third-party providers
- should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related school policies section below.

### **Definitions**

The following terms in this policy have specific definitions available on the department of education website at this link - <https://www.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards-definitions>:

- child
- child safety
- child abuse
- child-connected work
- child-related work
- school environment
- school staff
- school governing authority
- student
- volunteer.

### **3. STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY**

Shepparton Christian College is a child safe organisation that welcomes all children, young people and their families.

We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students. We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments.

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 and respond promptly and thoroughly.

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 sexually diverse (this includes sexual orientation, gender identity and expression), 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 our 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, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

### **4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### ***School Leadership Team***

Our school leadership team (comprising the Principal, Assistant Principal, Business Manager and Primary and Secondary Co-ordinators) is 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.

Principal and Assistant 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 board meetings
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of responding to 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 Staff and Volunteers***

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school or other training provides, and always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- act in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct (available at <https://scc.vic.edu.au/policies-and-publications/>)
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures (available at <https://scc.vic.edu.au/policies-and-publications/>)
- 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.

### ***School Board***

In performing their responsibilities and functions, school board members will:

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school board meetings
- undertake annual training on child safety
- approve updates to, and act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school board employees and members
- when hiring employees of Shepparton Christian College, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe. At our school, employment responsibilities are delegated to the Principal who is bound by this policy.

## **5. SPECIFIC STAFF CHILD SAFETY RESPONSIBILITIES**

Shepparton Christian College has nominated a child safety officer to support the Principal in implementing our child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training. The responsibilities of the child safety officer are outlined in the Child Safety Officer position description. Our principal and child safety officer are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

Our school has also established a Child Safety and Wellbeing Team (our team is called "DUO"), which meets regularly to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing. Our Child

Safety Risk Register is also regularly reviewed by the school leadership team to ensure all aspects of student safety are addressed.

## **6. CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT**

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets 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 (available at <https://scc.vic.edu.au/policies-and-publications/>).

## **7. MANAGING RISKS TO CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING**

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 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.

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 leadership team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

## **8. ESTABLISHING A CULTURALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

At Shepparton Christian College, 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 have developed the following strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community:

- Consulting with families and members of the Aboriginal community to identify opportunities to promote Aboriginal culture and practices
- Seeking feedback from Aboriginal children and their families on their experience at Shepparton Christian College, particularly in regards to how comfortable they feel expressing their identity, including their culture
- Provide training for staff on the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and young people
- We begin significant events with an Acknowledgement of Country
- Participate in national events such as National Apology to the Stolen Generations, Sorry Day, NAIDOC week.
- Embedding learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures across all areas of the curriculum in accordance with the Victorian curriculum.

## **9. STUDENT EMPOWERMENT**

To support child safety and wellbeing at Shepparton Christian College, 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.

Our junior and middle school social and emotional learning program Second Steps facilitates the development of friendships and supports students to develop assertiveness skills. We encourage strong friendships and peer support in the school to ensure a sense of belonging.

Our school has established Primary and Secondary Student Leadership groups which provide a voice for student input into child safe practices and policies within the school. In addition, students are supported and encouraged to raise concerns about the safety or wellbeing of their friends via engagement with their homeroom teachers as well as the school's counsellor and chaplain. Our student Code of Conduct and school values of compassion, humility, respect, integrity, service and truth (C.H.R.I.S.T.) also communicate to our school community the importance of having a safe and inclusive environment.

## **10. 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, at Shepparton Christian College we are 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.

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.

We do this by:

- Providing information through the school's webpage, Schoolstream, the SEQTA parent portal, PULSE publication, Parents and Friends committee, Parent/Teacher Interviews (PTI) and social media. These platforms are used to inform 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.

- all of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents at <https://scc.vic.edu.au/policies-and-publications/>
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school in at least three locations, one prominent for primary students, one prominent for secondary students and one prominent for staff.
- Our parent/student handbook provides information on children's rights and responsibilities to ensure the school is a safe place for all and encourages parent involvement in many areas of the school community.
- Our annual welcome BBQ and school fete facilitate connections with families and the broader community, which supports engagement with the schools commitment to child safety and inclusion.

## **11. 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, and children and young people who identify as sexually diverse (this includes sexual orientation, gender identity and expression).

To achieve this we:

- Maintain an extensive database for students with additional and special needs, including those on the NCCD list, ESL students, Indigenous students, and students yet to be diagnosed with additional needs but who have been identified as needing additional support
- Student support group meetings held regularly with the Learning Support Co-ordinator to facilitate communication with all relevant parties
- Learning support staff employed throughout all year levels to facilitate more intensive educational support
- Additional wellbeing support provided through the school's counsellor and chaplain
- Provide training for all staff on understanding diversity and how to support inclusion and cultural safety
- Have zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and take action if such behaviour is identified

## **12. SUITABLE STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

At Shepparton Christian College, 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.

The Shepparton Christian College Employment/Recruitment Policy outlines employment and recruitment practices in line with ensuring that all staff and contractors are suitable to work with children and young people.

The Shepparton Christian College Employment/Recruitment Policy is available from the College website at <https://scc.vic.edu.au/policies-and-publications/>

### ***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 by classroom observations, openly receiving feedback from parents and students, the annual staff development process (DAF) and other general feedback and observations of staff.

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

- Volunteers Policy  
<https://scc.vic.edu.au/policies-and-publications/>

### ***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
- 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.

### ***School board training and education***

To ensure our 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
- Shepparton Christian College child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices

## **13. COMPLAINTS AND REPORTING PROCESSES**

Shepparton Christian College 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.

We take all allegations of child abuse seriously and have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding appropriately. If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including school board employees) must follow our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures available at:

<https://scc.vic.edu.au/policies-and-publications/>

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.

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.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place. 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.

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.

- Our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy:  
<https://scc.vic.edu.au/policies-and-publications/>
- Bullying Prevention Policy which covers complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours:  
<https://scc.vic.edu.au/policies-and-publications/>

#### **14. COMMUNICATIONS**

Shepparton Christian College 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 Policy (this document), Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure
- Schoolstream for regular parent communication
- SEQTA for regular communications with students and parents
- Parents and Friends committee,
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school in at least three locations, one prominent for primary students, one prominent for secondary students and one prominent for staff.
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and school board meetings.

#### **15. PRIVACY AND INFORMATION SHARING**

Shepparton Christian College collects, uses, and discloses 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 school privacy policy (available at <https://scc.vic.edu.au/policies-and-publications/>).

#### **16. RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the Victorian Department of Education and Training's policy (available at <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/records-management/policy>)

#### **17. REVIEW OF CHILD SAFETY PRACTICES**

At Shepparton Christian College, 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 at least 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.

#### 18. 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](#)

#### 19. POLICY STATUS AND REVIEW

The Principal is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy at least every two years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school community.

*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 by School Board – JUNE 2022**