CHILD SAFETY POLICY

Date Approved:	17 March 2026
Approved by:	SCC Board

Help for non-English speakers
If you need help to understand this policy, please contact the school office on 5831 7790.

PURPOSE

The Shepparton Christian College (SCC) Child Safety Policy affirms our commitment to creating and maintaining a child-safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe, and feel safe, at all times.

This policy provides an overview of SCC's approach to implementing **Ministerial Order 1359**, which specifies how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply within school environments. It informs our school community of the shared obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children, and it guides the processes and practices that protect the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

SCOPE

This policy:

- applies to all school staff, volunteers, visitors and contractors, regardless of whether 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 (e.g., school camps), and those offered through third-party providers
- should be read in conjunction 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 correspond to specific definitions provided on the Department of Education website, accessible at the following 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

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- school governing authority
- student
- volunteer

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

SCC 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 heard in decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the diverse needs of all children and students. We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify, manage, and reduce any risks of harm to students within our school environments.

We actively 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 risks of harm to students within our school environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat them with the utmost seriousness and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, students 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. Bullying, harassment, and discrimination will not be tolerated. It includes but is not limited to harmful actions on the basis of race, identity, culture, religion, gender identity, sexuality, and disability. Any instances of this type of behaviour identified will be addressed promptly with appropriate consequences. Please refer to the Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy and the Discipline Policy for more information regarding the identification of these behaviours and the consequences.

Every member of the College community has a responsibility to understand their individual and collective roles in prioritising the wellbeing and safety of all students, and to ensure this responsibility guides everything they do and every decision they make.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform and improve our ongoing strategies.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

School Leadership Team

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Our school leadership team is responsible for creating and maintaining a strong child-safe culture and for ensuring that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with **Ministerial Order 1359.**

The Principal and Assistant Principal will:

- ensure that effective governance, policies, procedures, codes, and practices relating to child safety and wellbeing are in place and rigorously followed
- model a child-safe culture that encourages the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety, and wellbeing
- foster inclusive practices that address the diverse needs of all students
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.
- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the school community, including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and board meetings
- facilitate ongoing professional learning for staff and volunteers, where appropriate, to deepen understanding of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing, and the prevention and response to child safety incidents and concerns
- create an environment where child safety incidents, concerns and complaints are readily raised, ensuring no one is discouraged from reporting to the relevant authorities.

The Principal is the head of the school for the purposes of the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Child Safety Officer

The College has nominated a Child Safety Officer to support the Principal in implementing our child safety policies and practices, including the training of staff and volunteers. The Child Safety Officer receives additional specialised training in child safety and wellbeing, including, but not limited to, child protection matters. They serve as a primary point of contact for raising child safety concerns and are responsible for championing child safety throughout the school community. Additionally, they assist in coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

School Staff

All staff are required to comply with the Child Safety Policy and understand their legal obligations regarding the reporting of child abuse and other harm. Each individual is responsible for recognising key indicators of child abuse and other harm, remaining vigilant, and promptly raising any child safety incidents or concerns with the School's leadership team or the Child Safety Officer.

To meet these obligations, all staff will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school or other training providers, and always adhere to 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/)

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- identify and promptly raise concerns about child safety incidents and concerns in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures (available at https://scc.vic.edu.au/policies-and-publications/), and follow the *PROTECT Four Critical Actions* and *Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending*
- ensure that students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard in decisions that affect their lives
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of all students

Volunteers and Contractors

All volunteers and contractors are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of students within the School environment.

To meet these obligations:

- all volunteers and contractors must comply with SCC's Child Safety Policy, Student Wellbeing Policy, and Child Safety Code of Conduct
- volunteers and contractors engaged in direct contact with students, and any others deemed by the school to be involved in "child-connected work," must:
    - participate in a child safety induction and ongoing training provided by the College
    - be aware of key indicators of child abuse and other harm
    - understand their legal obligations concerning the reporting of child abuse and other harm
    - promptly raise all child safety concerns with the School's Leadership Team or the Child Safety Officer

School Board

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

- champion and promote a child-safe culture within 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 as it applies to school board employees and members
- when involved in 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

CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct establishes clear boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are unacceptable in both our physical and online environments.

We ensure that students also understand what behaviours are acceptable and unacceptable, empowering them to be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school.

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The Child Safety Code of Conduct also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour (available at https://scc.vic.edu.au/policies-and-publications/).

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MANAGING RISKS TO CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING

SCC recognises the importance of adopting a risk management approach to child safety, aiming to minimise the risk of harm to children and young people without compromising their rights to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.

We have implemented risk management strategies to identify, assess and manage child safety risks across all College environments,. These strategies consider factors such as the nature of our College's activities, the physical, virtual and online environments, and the characteristics of our student body. This information informs the development of our policies, procedures, and activity planning.

Our risk management strategies include:

- an active Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) committee
- human resource practices that include verifying staff registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) and Working With Children (WWC) checks are current
- a staff Code of Conduct that incorporates child safety standards
- regular staff training focused on child safety and protective behaviours
- building design practices that enhance safety, including doors that can be opened from the inside when locked, windows in office and classroom doors, and strategically placed windows in classrooms and meeting spaces to maximise visibility
- risk assessment forms for all camps and excursions that include an evaluation of risks related to child abuse.

We document identified risks to child safety and wellbeing in our Child Safety Risk Register, along with the corresponding actions implemented by the College to manage these risks. Our school leadership team monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

ESTABLISHING A CULTURALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT

At SCC, we are committed to fostering an inclusive and culturally safe environment that respects the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, values, and practices.

We are dedicated to ensuring every student has a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, we recognise the vital connection between culture, identity, and safety. We actively create opportunities for these students, their families, and communities to have a meaningful 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 and Torres Strait Islander community to identify opportunities to celebrate and promote their cultures and practices

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- seeking feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families regarding their experience at SCC, particularly regarding how comfortable they feel expressing their identity, including their culture
- providing staff with training on the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and their importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- commencing significant events with an Acknowledgement of Country
- participating in national events such as National Apology to the Stolen Generations and Sorry Day
- embedding learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures across all areas of the curriculum in accordance with the Victorian curriculum

STUDENT EMPOWERMENT

At SCC, we strive to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and responsibilities. We ensure that students are informed about their rights to safety, information and participation. We actively seek to understand what makes students feel safe in our school and regularly communicate with students about the steps they should take and the support available if they feel unsafe.

Our primary and secondary social and emotional learning programs support students in developing friendships and building assertiveness skills. We foster strong peer connections and a culture of mutual support to promote a sense of belonging for every student.

Our school has established Primary and Secondary Student Leadership groups that provide students with a voice in shaping child-safe practices and policies. Students are supported and encouraged to raise concerns about the safety or wellbeing of their peers through engagement with their classroom and homeroom teachers, as well as the school's counsellor and chaplain. Our Student Code of Conduct, together with our core values of compassion, humility, respect, integrity, service and truth (C.H.R.I.S.T.), reinforces to the school community the importance of maintaining a safe and inclusive environment.

When gathering information regarding a complaint of alleged misconduct or abuse of a child, the school will listen to the complainant's account with respect and take their concerns seriously. We will confirm our understanding of the complaint, provide appropriate support to the student, and keep them (and their parents or carers, where appropriate) informed about the progress of the matter.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

SCC recognises that parents and carers hold the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their children, and we actively seek to involve them in decisions that affect their children. We acknowledge that families and the wider school community play a vital role in monitoring and promoting the safety and wellbeing of children, as well as supporting them to raise any concerns.

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To support family engagement, we are committed to providing families and our school community with clear and accessible information about our child safety policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We are committed to creating opportunities for families to contribute to 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 procedures, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.
- making all of our child safety policies and procedures available at https://scc.vic.edu.au/policies-and-publications/
- displaying Child Safety posters across the school in at least three locations, one prominent for primary students, one prominent for secondary students and one prominent for staff.
- including information in our parent/student handbook about children's rights and responsibilities, highlighting the importance of maintaining a safe school environment, and encouraging parent involvement across the school community.
- hosting our annual welcome BBQ and school fete to facilitate connections with families and the broader community

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 meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those 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 identified as requiring additional support but not yet formally diagnosed

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- run regular student support group meetings with the Learning Support Co-ordinator to facilitate communication among all relevant parties
- employ learning support staff across all year levels to facilitate more intensive educational support
- provide additional wellbeing support through the school's counsellor and chaplain
- provide staff training focused on understanding diversity and how to support inclusion and cultural safety
- uphold a zero tolerance policy towards racism and other forms of discrimination and take action if such behaviour is identified

SUITABLE STAFF, VOLUNTEERS AND CONTRACTORS

Recruitment and Screening

At SCC, we implement robust child-safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, volunteers and contractors are suitable to work with children. Our Employment/Recruitment Policy outlines these practices aligning with our commitment to ensure that all personnel working with children and young people meet the highest standards of suitability and safety. Our practices include:

- making our commitment to child safety and wellbeing clear in recruitment advertising and documentation
- requiring all staff, volunteers and contractors to maintain a valid VIT registration or WWCC, and sighting, verifying and recording this information
- using additional selection, background checking and screening processes that take child safety considerations into account, such as requiring a minimum of 2 referees for staff and volunteers

The Employment/Recruitment Policy is available from the College upon request.

Staff induction

All newly appointed staff will be expected to participate in our child safety induction program. The program will include a focus on:

- the Child Safety Policy (this document)
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role

Suitability of volunteers

All volunteers are required to comply with our Volunteers and Contractors Policy, which outlines how we assess the suitability of prospective volunteers and our expectations regarding child safety and wellbeing induction and training, supervision and management.

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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 child abuse and other harm and identifying key indicators, including harm caused by other children and young people
- policies and procedures for responding to and reporting child safety incidents or concerns (including mandatory reporting, reporting to police and reportable conduct obligations)
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and young people
- information sharing and record keeping obligations in regard to child safety incidents and concerns
- 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 identified or emerging needs or issues.

Ongoing supervision and management of staff

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be appropriately supervised to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. Their ongoing suitability for child-connected work will be monitored and assessed through classroom observations, feedback from parents and students, the annual staff development process (DAF), and other general feedback and observations.

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

School board training and education

To ensure our school board is equipped with the knowledge required to make informed decisions prioritising student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety risks within our school environment, the board receives training at least annually. Training includes guidance on:

- the individual and collective obligations and responsibilities of board members to implement the Child Safe Standards and manage the risk of child abuse in our school community

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- child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment
- the school's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices

COMPLAINTS AND REPORTING PROCESSES

SCC fosters a culture that encourages everyone in the school community to raise concerns and complaints about child safety and wellbeing. 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 or other harm 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, volunteers (including school board employees) and contractors must follow our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures.

The College's response will include:

- externally reporting all matters that meet the required relevant thresholds to Child Protection (Mandatory Reports), the Police (Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse), the CCYP (Reportable Conduct), and/or the Victorian Institute of Teaching (Teacher Misconduct), depending on the issues raised and consistent with *PROTECT Four Critical Actions* and *Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending*
- fully cooperating with any resulting investigation by an external agency
- protecting any student connected to the child safety incident or concern until it is resolved and providing ongoing support to those affected
- taking particular measures in response to child safety incidents or concerns about an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student, a student from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, a student with disability, and other vulnerable students (such as students who are unable to live at home or students who identify as sexually diverse)
- sharing information with, or requesting information from, external people or agencies as permitted or required under the Child Information Sharing Scheme and/or the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme
- securing and retaining records of the child safety incident or concern and the College's response to it
- taking broader actions to improve child safety at the College (including conducting systemic reviews and implementing improvements)

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 their delegate thoroughly and promptly. Where required, an external investigator will be engaged to ensure impartiality.

Everyone has a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if they hold a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred. All children, families, volunteers, and staff are encouraged to raise concerns with the

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Principal, Assistant Principal, or the Primary or Secondary Coordinator. Concerns may also be reported through the College Counsellor, Chaplain, or other trusted staff members.

COMMUNICATIONS

SCC 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, Student Wellbeing Policy and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures
- utilising Schoolstream for regular parent communication
- utilising SEQTA for regular communications with students and parents
- our Parents and Friends committee
- displaying Child Safety posters across the school
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and school board meetings

PRIVACY AND INFORMATION SHARING

The College 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 College to disclose information about child safety and wellbeing to external people and agencies. For information about how the College collects, uses and discloses this information, refer to our Privacy Policy.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

We acknowledge that effective records management is 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)

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REVIEW OF CHILD SAFETY PRACTICES

At SCC 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 by sharing pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community

RELATED SCHOOL POLICIES

Related school policies include:

- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Student Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures

POLICY STATUS AND REVIEW

The Principal is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy at least every two years.

Version History:
2026 (This version) 2025 2022 2020 2016 2012 2009

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