

GREATER SHEPPARTON SECONDARY COLLEGE

CHILD SAFE STANDARDS POLICY

Review Cycle:	3-4 years	Due Date of Review:	March 2023
School Council Endorsement Date: 27 March 2020			

OUR COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Greater Shepparton Secondary College is firmly committed to the care, wellbeing and protection of its students. It recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, inclusive, supportive and enriching environment, which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development. Greater Shepparton Secondary College has zero tolerance for child abuse and is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy helps guide the actions of all staff, students, parents, and other visitors to the school to ensure that Greater Shepparton Secondary College provides a child-safe environment with a zero-tolerance to child abuse.

We support and respect all child, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for all children including those from the LGBTQI+ community, and students with a disability.

OUR CHILDREN

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular, we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children;
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- ensure that children from the LGBTQI+ community are safe;
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

OUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children from the LGBTQI+ community, and children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be guided 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. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

RECRUITMENT

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Greater Shepparton Secondary College understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, the LGBTQI+ community, and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and provide evidence of this Check.

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, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

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. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is

entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

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.
- 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).

ALLEGATIONS, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

Greater Shepparton Secondary College takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

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.

REPORTING

From 1st July 2017 principals are required to bring all allegations of 'reportable conduct' by employees, contractors, volunteers, allied health staff and school council employees to the attention of the Department's Employee Conduct Branch.

There is an allegation of 'reportable conduct', where a person has a reasonable belief that there has been:

- a sexual offence (even prior to criminal proceedings commencing), sexual misconduct by physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child;
- behaviour causing significant emotional or psychological harm, or
- significant neglect.

Once the principal has notified 'reportable conduct' to Employee Conduct Branch, the branch will report the allegations to the Commission for Children & Young People (CCYP) within three days, as required by legislation.

RELATED POLICIES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information:

- Ministerial Order No. 870
- Child Safe Standards – DET
- Duty of Care – DET
- PROTECT portal - DET

Related Policies:

- Bullying Prevention
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy
- Inclusion and diversity