


GEELONG BAPTIST COLLEGE CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY			
Adopted by: Board	Reviewed by: Board	Date: 06/22	
To Be Reviewed: 2024			

This policy is called the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy* to align with the title referenced in the Child Safe Standards and [Ministerial Order 1359](#) (PDF, 363KB).

Geelong Baptist College is committed to being a community which has zero tolerance towards any form of abuse. We are committed to the care, safety and welfare of all students in our care.

We are dedicated to supporting and complying with every aspect of the **Child Safety Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools**, as reporter by ministerial Order No. 870. This policy demonstrates the strong commitment of Geelong Baptist College to child safety and establishing and maintaining child safe and child friendly environments.

Our approach is holistic and involves all aspects where risk to our children’s safety is a factor. This would include aquatics, sport, camping, youth leadership, health and all forms of recreation.

We invite all members of our College community to be engaged in assisting us in ensuring that the safety of our children is not compromised. Child safety is everyone’s responsibility.

Purpose

This policy demonstrates Geelong Baptist College’s (GBC) 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 GBC’s approach to implementing [Ministerial Order 1359](#) (PDF, 363KB) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

It informs GBC’s 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.

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 by 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](#):

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

Statement of commitment to child safety

GBC is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families.

GBC is 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.

At GBC we have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in GBC's environments.

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

At GBC we take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in GBC's 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 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 GBC, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences. Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in the GBC community has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

At GBC 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.

Strategies include:

- publishing CSS articles in the College newsletter
- induction process for all staff and volunteers
- promotion of Child Safe Standards by strategically communicating with staff at meetings
- clear statements in the *Child Safety Code of Conduct – Staff/Volunteer/Contractor Policy*
- implementation of a *Parent Code of Conduct Policy*
- regularly revisiting *Child Safety Reporting and Responding Obligations Policy* (Mandatory Reporting)
- involving the parent community and student body in relevant policy development

All staff members and those within the College community are Child Safety representatives. Children, parents, employees and volunteers wishing to discuss issues that may jeopardise their safety are encouraged to report to any staff member. We have as a designated *Child Safety and Wellbeing Team (CSWT)* who will be supported by the principals. Ultimately, the principal is the person who would support those making a claim. This policy was developed in collaboration with all our employees, the students who use our services and their parents. This aspect of commitment to our student's safety is underpinned by the *Child Safety Reporting and Responding Obligations Policy*.

Roles and responsibilities

School leadership team

Our College *Child Safety and Wellbeing Team (CSWT)* (comprising the Principals, Deans and Counsellor and headed up by the Head of Student Services (HOSS)) 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.

This team 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 school 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.

College staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school or the Department of Education and Training, and always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- act in accordance with our Child Safety Staff/Volunteer/Contractor Code of Conduct
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures* [also on the College website], including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- 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.

College Board

In performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, GBC's 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 school board employees, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe. All employment duties are bound by this policy.

Specific staff child safety responsibilities

GBC has nominated a *Child Safety and Wellbeing Team (CSWT)* to support the principal/s to implement our child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training.

The responsibilities of the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Team (CSWT)* are outlined at [Guidance for child safety champions](#)

The principals and Child Safety and Wellbeing Team (CSWT) are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

- *Child Safety and Wellbeing Team (CSWT)* headed up by the HOSS is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*. Anyone in the GBC community should approach this team if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- The *Child Safety and Wellbeing Team (CSWT)* is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in other child safety policies and procedures, including the *Child Safety Code of Conduct*, *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy* (including Mandatory Reporting) and Procedures, and *Child Safety Risk Register*.

The College has also established a Child Safety and Wellbeing Team and a Student Reference Group on child safety. The Child Safety and Wellbeing Team meet regularly to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing. The Student Representative Council provides an opportunity for students to provide input into school strategies.

GBC's Child Safety and Wellbeing Team, monitors the Child Safety Risk Register to mitigate child safety at the College.

Child Safety Code of Conduct (Staff/Volunteer/Contractor)

GBC's *Child Safety Code of Conduct - Staff/Volunteer/Contractor Policy* 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.

GBC ensures 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 - Staff/Volunteer/Contractor Policy* also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing

At GBC we identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site overnight camps, adventure activities and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

GBC's *Child Safety Risk Register* is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. GBC's leadership team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register bi-annually.

This register identifies areas of potential concern and encourages a risk rating associated with those risks and the strategies in place to mitigate or eliminate those risks.

Establishing a culturally safe environment

At GBC, 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 GBC's planning, policies, and activities.

At GBC we promote cultural safety in GBC's community by:

- encouraging and supporting children and young people to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights
- embedding strategies to equip staff members (and volunteers) to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and young people
- adopting measures to ensure that racism within the school is identified, confronted and not tolerated, and addressing instances of racism with appropriate consequences
- actively supporting and facilitating participation and inclusion by Aboriginal children, young people and their families
- ensuring that all of the school's policies, procedures, systems and processes create a culturally safe and inclusive environment and meet the needs of Aboriginal children, young people and their families.

"Cultural safety" means an environment that is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for Aboriginal people, and where there is no assault on, challenge of or denial of their identity, who they are and what they need. The concept was originally developed specifically for Aboriginal people within health settings.

Student empowerment

To support child safety and wellbeing at GBC, 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 encouraged, while strong friendships and peer support in the school to ensure a sense of belonging through our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships, and our *Student Conduct, Discipline and Uniform Policy*.

Students are informed of their rights through Respectful Relationships material, pastoral care program and assemblies, and they are given the 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. At GBC 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. Students and families can also access information on how to report concerns on the College website.

When the College 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

At GBC, the 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 GBC we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about GBC'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 the GBC child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

GBC accomplishes this by:

- publishing the policies on the website and newsletter and seeking comment and feedback from the community
- all of our College's child safety policies and procedures are available for students and parents at the GBC College website and/or at the College administration
- Newsletters will inform families and the school community about any significant updates to the child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters are displayed across the school 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. GBC's focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

Particular attention is paid to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring GBC's 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
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

GBC's *Student Safety and Welfare Policy* and *Student Diversity Policy* provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

Suitable staff and volunteers

At GBC, 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.

Staff recruitment

When recruiting staff, GBC follows the College's Recruitment Policy.

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching registration
- collect and record:
 - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
 - the person's history of working with children
 - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

Staff induction

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

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

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 annual performance reviews.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with GBC and department policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount and annual policy reminders or updates related to the *Reportable Conduct Policy* are communicated to staff.

Suitability of volunteers

All volunteers are required to comply with our *Parent Conduct Policy* and the complete the Parent Volunteers course, 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.

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, the GBC 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:

- GBC'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 GBC volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

School board training and education

To ensure GBC's 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 GBC's 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 GBC's environment
- child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices

Complaints and reporting processes

GBC 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.

At GBC, we have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in the school's *Complaint Policy*. The Complaints Policy can be found in the College Diary and can be obtained from administration.

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 (mandatory reporting). The GBC policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school.

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, we will ensure GBC follows:

- the [Four Critical Actions](#) for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child
- the [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending

GBC's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy*, *Student Safety and Welfare Policy* and *Student Conduct, Discipline and Uniform Policy* cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

Communications

GBC is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on College website including the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy* (this document), *Child Safety Code of Conduct - Staff/Volunteer/Contractor Policy*, and the *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedure* (Mandatory Reporting)
- displaying PROTECT posters around the College
- updates in the GBC newsletter
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and school board meetings.

Privacy and information sharing

GBC collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws.

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 Department of Education and Training's policy:

[Records Management – School Records](#)

Review of child safety practices

At GBC, 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 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 the GBC community.

Related policies and procedures

This *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy* is to be read in conjunction with other related school policies, procedures, and codes. These include GBC's:

- *Student Conduct, Discipline and Uniform Policy*
- *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures (Mandatory Reporting)*
- *Child Safety Code of Conduct - Staff/Volunteer/Contractor Policy Complaints Policy*
- *Inclusion and Diversity Policy*
- *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy*
- *Volunteer Training*
- *Student Safety and Welfare Policy*

GBC Flowchart: CHILD SAFETY REPORTING PROCESS

