

**GEELONG BAPTIST COLLEGE
CHILD SAFETY POLICY**



Adopted By: Principal

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CONTENTS

1. Purpose (CSS 2)
2. Context (CSS 1)
3. Scope (CSS 1)
4. Commitment to child safety (CSS 2)
5. Children's participation (CSS 7)
6. Recruitment practices (CSS 4)
7. Code of Conduct (CSS 3)
8. Support for employees and volunteers (CSS 1, CSS 2)
9. Strategies to minimise risk (CSS 6)
10. Reporting and responding to suspected child abuse and neglect (CSS 5)
11. Empowerment/Participation/Harassment/Bullying (CSS 7)
12. Communication
13. Related policies and procedures (CSS 1)
14. APPENDIX 1 - Assessments required for prescribed positions (CSS 4)
15. APPENDIX 2 - Appropriate and Inappropriate behaviours (CSS 3)

1. Purpose (Child Safety Standard 2)

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 mandated by ministerial Order No. 870. This policy was written to demonstrate 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.

The 7 Child Safety Standards below are addressed in this policy:

- Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements
- Standard 2: A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety
- Standard 3: A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
- Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
- Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
- Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
- Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

2. Context (Child Safety Standard 1)

This policy reflects our commitment to provide a safe environment where every person has the right to be treated with respect and is safe and protected from harm. The policy builds on and endorses the policies that are already in place at the College.

It complies with our obligations under the *Children's Protection Act 1993*, including:

- Section 8B – 8D – child safe environments and criminal history assessments for people working with children; and
- Section 11 – Mandatory reporting.

It also complies with the Child safe environments: Principles of good practice and Child safe environments: Standards for dealing with information obtained about the criminal history of employees and volunteers who work with children issued by the Chief Executive. (Section 8A, *Children's Protection Act 1993*).

3. Scope (Child Safety Standard 1)

This policy, from the date of endorsement, applies to all people involved in the organisation, including:

- employees (permanent and casual)
- volunteers
- contractors
- sub-contractors
- work experience students
- indirect service providers
- any other individual involved in this organisation

Note: In this policy, the term "employee" is intended to cover all persons occupying any position listed above.

4. Commitment to child safety (Child Safety Standard 2)

We believe that all children who come to Geelong Baptist College have a right to feel and be safe. This is not simply a view, it is a goal and we have embedded this in our culture. We are committed to the safety and well-being of all children and young people accessing our services. The welfare of the children in our care will always be our first priority. We aim to create a child safe and child friendly environment where all children are valued and feel safe.

We have a range of strategies that underpin this culture and child safety at the College.

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. Ultimately, the principal is the person who would support those making a claim. This policy was developed in collaboration with all our employees, the children who use our services and their parents.

5. Children's participation (Child Safe Standard 7)

Geelong Baptist College encourages and respects the views of children and young people who access our services. We listen to and act upon any concerns that children, young people or their families raise with us. We teach children what they can do if they feel unsafe.

We endeavour to ensure that children, young people and their families know their rights and how to access the complaints procedures available to them.

We value diversity and do not tolerate any discriminatory practices. The various cultures reflected in the College are respected and affirmed. No child from any culture will be discriminated against and will be accepted within the College.

6. Recruitment practices (Child Safe Standard 4)

Geelong Baptist College takes all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. We employ a range of screening measures and apply best practice standards in the screening and recruitment of employees and volunteers.

All of our advertising for vacancies indicates our commitment to child safe standards. Applicants are referred to the College website for the details of this policy.

Shortlisted applicants are interviewed and Child Safety is incorporated in this process. Successful applicants are thoroughly inducted into the College and this process includes a thorough unpacking of policies, including the *Camp Policy*, *Social Media Policy*, *Respectful Workplace*, *Staff Code of Conduct* and *Child Safety Policy*.

The College will make reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about a person whom it proposes to engage to perform child connected work:

- Working with Children Check status, or similar check;
- proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications;
- the person's history of work involving children; and
- references that address the person's suitability for the job and working with children.

We ensure that we interview prospective employees carefully and require that all references addressing the applicant's suitability for the job and working with children are certified copies so as to ensure proof of personal identity and of any professional or other qualifications.

All staff members employed to *teach students* are required to provide evidence of their VIT registration and ensure that these remain current.

We ensure that all people working with children have a current Working with Children Check, as set out in Section 8B of the *Children's Protection Act 1993*. Criminal history assessments are required for anyone within our organisation who:

- has regular contact with children and is not directly supervised at all times;
- works in close proximity to children on a regular basis and is not directly supervised at all times; or
- supervises or manages persons who:
 - have regular contact with children or
 - work in close proximity to children on a regular basis; or
- has access to sensitive records relating to children or young people.

Exemptions from this requirement may apply in some circumstances.

We ensure that criminal history information is dealt with in accordance with the Child Safe Environments: Standards for dealing with information obtained about the criminal history of employees and volunteers who work with children, issued pursuant to Section 8A, *Children's Protection Act 1993*.

As is outlined in the Staff Code of Conduct, the procedure for dealing with members charged with, or under investigation is such that these persons would be suspended immediately pending the outcome.

For information regarding *conducting criminal history assessments*, see **APPENDIX 1**

7. Code of Conduct (Child Safety Standard 3)

All members on staff are made aware of, and must abide by, the College's Code of Conduct. Our Code of Conduct was developed in collaboration with employees, volunteers, the children who use our services and their parents.

Our Code of Conduct is set out clearly as a policy and is to be read in conjunction with the VIT Code of Conduct. All staff members have a copy of this policy in their Staff Handbook and this is communicated to employees, relief teachers and volunteers at the College.

In order to minimise risks as well as guide and support staff, a general set of Child Protection guidelines for employees and volunteers of Geelong Baptist College is attached in **APPENDIX 2**.

8. Support for employees and volunteers (CSS 1, CSS 2)

Geelong Baptist College seeks to attract and retain the best employees and volunteers. We provide support and supervision so people feel valued, respected and fairly treated. We ensure that employees/volunteers who work with children have ongoing supervision, support and training so that their capacity is developed and enhanced to promote the establishment and maintenance of a child safe environment.

Strategies we have implemented include:

- All new employees undergo induction and receive a copy of our Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct.
- All employees receive regular policy update sessions that include a focus on ongoing learning about child protection and other matters that affect children and young people.
- All staff are effectively child safety officers and have been appointed as a point of contact for all child protection matters.
- Volunteers are not left unsupervised and in the care of children.

9. Strategies to minimise risk (Child Safe Standard 6)

Policies and procedures may address (but are not limited to):

- Transportation
- Taking images of children
- Camps and excursions
- Supervision of children
- All staff are effectively Child Safety Officers with the responsibility being shared with the principals
- Complaints procedures
- Physical contact
- Responsibilities
- Procedure for breaches of policy
- Training/cyber safe guidelines
- Protecting privacy and confidentiality
- Procedures for dealing with situations where a member is being investigated for, or is charged with, a serious criminal offence.

Evaluation of these strategies and the development of additional strategies to minimise and control risks to children and young people occur as part of our ongoing risk management process.

10. Reporting and responding to suspected child abuse and neglect (Child Safety Standard 5)

Geelong Baptist College will not tolerate incidents of child abuse.

All employees and volunteers understand their obligation to notify the Child Abuse Report Line on **13 12 78** as soon as practicable if they have a reasonable suspicion that a child has been, or is being, abused or neglected.

We provide annual in-service training of our Mandatory Reporting Policy. This Policy is updated annually and presented to staff in the form of a refresher course at the start of each year. All staff have to complete the Mandatory Reporting online assessment tool, print out a copy of their certificate and submit this for retention by the College. Staff are also in-serviced regarding the Child Safety Policy.

We ensure that support is also available for the employee making the report, particularly where an ongoing service is provided to the child, young person and their family.

Supporting children, young people and their families

Child Protection is everyone's responsibility. Geelong Baptist College recognises that even where a report is made, we may still have a role in supporting the child or young person. This support may include:

- Referring the child, young person or their family to other appropriate services
- Displaying information about services that can assist children and their families (such as the Kids Helpline and Youth Healthline) in areas accessed by children and their families.

Dealing with reports or concerns relating to the actions of an employee or volunteer of our organisation

In addition to making a report to the Child Abuse Report Line, employees and volunteers must also report to the principals or management if reasonable suspicion is formed that a child has been, or is being, abused or neglected by another member, employee, or volunteer.

In response to any report to management concerning a member, employee or volunteer of this organisation, management may determine to take disciplinary action.

Other protective actions may also be introduced to ensure the safety of children and young people within our organisation.

More information about making appropriate reports of abuse or neglect is available from the DHS website <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/crisis-and-emergency/reporting-child-abuse>

11. Empowerment/Participation/Harassment/bullying (CSS 7)

All students are valued at Geelong Baptist College. Our open enrolment policy is an indication of this stance. Children with disabilities or additional needs are treated with the same respect and dignity that any other child is afforded. These students are given all possible support to ensure their wellbeing, academic progress and safety within the College. Staff are in-serviced regarding students with particular needs and every effort is made to ensure their safety and success.

Cultural consideration is given to all students who may have a range of cultural values. Staff are encouraged to use extreme sensitivity, care and diplomacy when dealing with students from other cultures.

Access to all aspects of education are extended to all students without prejudice. Geelong Baptist College opposes all forms of harassment, discrimination and bullying. We take this issue seriously and encourage anyone who believes that they, or another person, has been harassed, bullied or discriminated against, to report these behaviours. Students are supported throughout their time at the College through the pastoral care program which tackles resilience and bullying issues that might occur at the College. The College diary and website has an outline of the bullying policies and procedures and those discriminated against, harassed or bullied are encouraged to raise this issue with a staff member or management.

12. Communication

Geelong Baptist College will ensure that everyone to whom this policy applies is aware of and has had an opportunity to read the policy. The policy will be made available on the College website and is readily available to anyone in the community who would want to obtain a copy for themselves. Staff will have a PD when this is implemented and it will be addressed with Mandatory Reporting Policy each year.

We also ask employees, (volunteers and parents where appropriate) to sign a written statement indicating that they have read and will abide by our child-safe policy. We retain a copy of all signed statements.

13. Related policies and procedures (Child Safe Standard 1)

- *College Code of conduct (also the VIT Code of Conduct)*
- *Risk Management Policy*
- *OH & S*
- *Mandatory Reporting*
- *Camp and Excursions Policy*
- *Bus Behaviour Policy*
- *First Aid Policy*
- *Yard duty*
- *Student Diversity Policy*
- *Complaints Procedure*

- *Parent Handbook*
- *Staff Handbook*
- *Template statement to be signed by employees, volunteers and parents volunteering, indicating they have read and will abide by policy*
- *Work Experience*
- *Employment Policy*
- *Discipline Policy*
- *ICT/Social Media Policy/Student Welfare Policy*
- *Employment Contracts*
- *Induction Policy*

APPENDIX 1

Conducting criminal history assessments

Assessments required for prescribed positions

All employees and volunteers of Geelong Baptist College who occupy a prescribed position (as set out under Section 8B (8) of the *Children's Protection Act 1993*) are required to undergo a criminal history assessment or a current VIT registration where appropriate.

Criminal history assessments or a current VIT registration are also required prior to the appointment of new employees or members to prescribed positions.

This requirement applies to all employees who regularly work with or around children in an unsupervised capacity or have access to prescribed records relating to children.

Exemptions from this requirement may apply in some circumstances (see below). However Geelong Baptist College retains the discretion to decide on a case-by-case basis whether any relevant exemptions will be exercised.

Exemptions

The following organisations, persons and positions are exempt from the application of Section 8B of the Act:

(a) an organisation that provides equipment, food or venues for children's parties or events and does not provide any other services;

(b) a person who undertakes work on a voluntary basis to provide a service in his or her capacity as a parent or guardian of a child who is ordinarily provided with the service;

(c) a person who undertakes work on a voluntary basis to provide a service and who is under 18 years of age;

(d) a person who undertakes work in the course of, or for the purposes of, an event or activity that takes place over a period of not more than 10 consecutive days or not more than 1 day in any month;

(e) a person appointed as a police officer;

(f) a person who is a registered teacher (within the meaning of the Teachers

Registration and Standards Act 2004);

(g) a person who undertakes, or a position that only involves, work that is not for the exclusive benefit of children and is not provided to any child on an individual basis;

(h) a position that only involves prescribed functions because children are employed or engaged to work as volunteers by the person occupying the position or by that person's employer;

(i) a position in which all work involving children is undertaken in the presence of the children's parents or guardians and in which there is ordinarily no physical contact with the children.

APPENDIX 2

Child Protection guidelines for employees and volunteers of Geelong Baptist College

Caring for children and young people brings additional responsibilities for employees and volunteers of this organisation. In addition to abiding by the policies previously mentioned in this document, all employees and volunteers of this organisation are responsible for promoting the safety and well-being of children and young people by:

- Ensuring the safety and welfare of the child or young person is paramount at all times.
- Treating all children and young people with dignity, equality and respect.
- Adhering to this organisation's child safe policy at all times.
- Listening and responding appropriately to the views and concerns of children and young people within the organisation.
- Taking all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people within the organisation.
- Ensuring children and young people understand their rights and explaining to the child in age-appropriate language what they can expect when participating in a service, activity or program offered by the organisation.
- Responding quickly, fairly and transparently to any serious complaints made by a child, young person or their parent/guardian.
- Notifying the **Child Abuse Report Line on 13 12 78** as soon as practicable if they have a reasonable suspicion that a child or young person has been or is being abused or neglected.

Employees/volunteers will not:

- Take part in any unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person.
- Discriminate against any child or young person because of age, gender, cultural background, religion, vulnerability or sexuality.
- Develop any 'special' relationships with children or young people outside of the professional relationship.

Acceptable and unacceptable behaviour (Child Safety Standard 3)

Principles for adult's behaviour in undertaking child-connected work

Some simple principles should guide an adult's behaviour when undertaking child-connected work such as:

- the adult/child relationship should be professional at all times
- an adult's response to a child's behaviour or circumstance should be commensurate with the child's age and vulnerability and the adult's responsibility for the care, safety and welfare of the child
- an adult should not be alone with a child unless there is line of sight to other adults
- an adult should not initiate or seek physical contact or contact with children outside school.

Acceptable and unacceptable behaviours

The followings lists provide examples of statements about acceptable and unacceptable behaviours which could be included in a school's code of conduct. The lists are not intended to be exhaustive, but may assist schools when customising their codes of conduct to the expectations and needs of their own communities.

Acceptable behaviours

All staff, volunteers and board/school council members are responsible for supporting the safety of children by:

- adhering to the school's child safe policy and upholding the school's statement of commitment to child safety at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating everyone in the school community with respect
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child's self-identification)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination)
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities)
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not alone with a child

- reporting any allegations of child abuse to the school's leadership (or child safety officer if the school has appointed someone to this role)
- understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to mandatory reporting and reporting under the Crimes Act 1958
- reporting any child safety concerns to the school's leadership (or child safety officer if the school has appointed someone to this role)
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe
- reporting to the Victorian Institute of Teaching any charges, committals for trial or convictions in relation to a sexual offence by a registered teacher, or certain allegations or concerns about a registered teacher.

Unacceptable behaviours

Staff and volunteers must not:

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse
- develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps)
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)
- initiate unnecessary physical contact which children or do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities)
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- discriminate against any child, including because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability
- staff are discouraged from having contact with a child or their family outside of school without the school's leadership or child safety officer's (if the school has appointed someone to this role) knowledge and consent or the school governing authority's approval (for example, unauthorised after hours tutoring, private instrumental/other lessons or sport coaching). Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate
- have any online contact with a child (including by social media, email, instant messaging etc) or their family (unless necessary eg by providing families with e-newsletters or assisting students with their school work)
- use any personal communication channels/device such as a personal email account

- exchange **personal contact details** such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses
- contact details are shared only on a needs basis
- photos or video a child without the consent of the parent or guardians. Such footage should be deleted once transferred to the College devices
- work with children whilst under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- consume alcohol or drugs at school or at school events
- teachers are discouraged from attending events without the prior knowledge of the principal