

Child Protection and Safety Policy

Introduction

Gippsland Grammar (the **School**) is committed to protecting its students from all aspects of harm, and has established strategies, practices, policies and procedures to uphold this commitment.

The School takes a zero tolerance approach to any behaviours that jeopardise student safety (including child abuse and reportable conduct). The School regards its child safety responsibilities with the utmost importance, and strives to deliver an academic care model that promotes the School's core values of compassion, leadership, excellence, respect and responsibility.

The School's aim is to create an environment where students can learn in a calm and focused environment characterised by ethical behaviour and defined professional boundaries, and where they feel safe and supported by the School.

The School recognises that any person in authority within, or in relation to the School has a statutory duty under section 49O of the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) to protect children studying at the School from any substantial risk that they will become the victim of a sexual offence committed by another person who is 18 years of age or more and associated with the School.

In addition, the School has a pastoral, moral and legal responsibility to create an inextricable connection between student safety and learning, especially in a positive environment where enjoyment and a passion for excellence is shared by all.

This connection will be the foundation of all decisions made, and actions taken by the School when delivering quality education to its students. At all times, the ongoing safety of its students will be at the forefront of mind, and the School's primary focus.

The School treats seriously its reporting obligations in relation to student safety matters, including to the Commission for Children and Young People and Victoria Police. The School recognises that whilst reporting obligations may differ depending on a person's position within the School, all staff are required to uphold the ethos of this policy by ensuring that student safety matters are reported internally, and externally where required.

As such, this Policy sets out how the School will meet its responsibilities and commitment to student safety, and is a child safety policy made in accordance with *Ministerial Order No. 870 – Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools*.

This Policy is part of the School's Child Protection Program.

Definitions

A number of terms in this Policy are defined in the Child Protection Program Definitions document (a copy of which is available on Complispace and the School's website).

Relevant Principles

The School's commitment to student safety is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of strategies, practices, policies and procedures to uphold our commitment to protect students from all forms of harm.

1. All students at the School have a right to be safe and to feel safe.
2. The welfare and the best interests of the student are paramount.
3. The views of the student and a student's privacy must be respected.
4. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour by staff with students must be established, including in the Child Protection Staff Code of Conduct.
5. The safety of students is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.
6. Student safety awareness is embodied, promoted and openly discussed within our School community.
7. Procedures are in place to screen all staff, contractors, volunteers and external education providers who engage in child-connected work (whether occurring on the School grounds or at a location connected to the School).
8. Student safety is everyone's responsibility.
9. Student safety training is mandatory for all members of the Board, the Principal, staff and anyone else otherwise engaged by the School in relation to child-connected work.
10. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse or reportable conduct are clear and accessible for all members of the School community.
11. Students from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support.
12. Students who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander have the right to special care and support.
13. Students with a disability have the right to have special care and support.

Statement of Commitment to Student Safety

A student safe school culture

Creating and maintaining a student safe culture requires input from the entire School community. Our aim, is to provide a safe environment that aligns with the core values of academic care at Gippsland Grammar; compassion, leadership, excellence, respect and responsibility.

To achieve this, we promote a model of education where students are understood not just as learners, but as an integral part of the School and broader community. As such, we value wellbeing and resilience, celebrate diversity, and embrace a growth mindset, through classroom experiences, and in our approach to academic care, practices policies and procedures.

The commitments, values and principles which guide the School are further outlined below.

Support and engagement of all students

The School appreciates that a student safe environment looks different for every student, and in delivering this, respects the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of students with a disability or who are otherwise vulnerable.

Our primary focus in delivering academic care, education and through decision-making, is that all students are safe, feel safe, and are able to create and develop a range of strategies and skills, which can be used flexibly to flourish in all aspects of their lives. As such, we support and encourage students to talk openly and share their views, particularly about matters that directly impact them.

The School will aim to ensure students (and their parents) are provided with the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their own personal safety and wellbeing, including:

1. Understanding, identifying, discussing and reporting student safety matters.
2. Standards of behaviour for students attending the School.
3. Healthy and respectful relationships (including those relating to gender and sexuality).
4. Resilience.

The School will promote its student safety practices to students in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand and user-friendly.

Raising and responding to student safety concerns

The School has a Make a Report Procedure, available on the School's website, which sets out:

1. How concerns about actual and suspected child abuse and reportable conduct may be raised with the School.
2. Who such concerns can be raised with at first instance, who include the Principal, the Executive Leadership Team and the School's Student Protection Officers.
3. How such concerns will be dealt with by the School (including by complying with any legislative reporting obligations).
4. How the School will support or assist students (and their families) who disclose such concerns, or who are otherwise linked to such concerns.

Student safe employment practices

We believe that the safety of students is dependent on the existence of a student safe culture. Establishing that culture requires effective staff recruitment, supervision and management practices.

All positions at the School that involve child-connected work will have a position description, which clearly sets out:

1. The position's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding student safety.

2. The candidate's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to education and student safety.
3. The School's ethos, values and commitment in respect of student safety.

All prospective staff will be informed about the School's student safety practices, and be subject to child protection screening in accordance with the School's obligations under legislation (including *Ministerial Order No. 870 – Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools*).

A successful candidate cannot commence at the School until written clearance in respect of child protection screening is obtained. Further, a current VIT registration or Working with Children Check (or equivalent) must be sighted by the School, and appropriately recorded before staff can engage in child connected work.

Appropriate and mandatory induction regarding the School's student safety practices will follow any successful appointment or engagement.

The School requires that staff act professionally, and in a way that embodies the School's commitment to student safety. The School has a Child Protection Staff Code of Conduct, available on the School's website, which sets out appropriate and inappropriate behaviours by staff. The School will take appropriate disciplinary action where a staff member is found to have acted contrary to that Code, or the School's other policies and procedures regarding appropriate standards of behaviour.

The School also acknowledges the complexities which arise at Blackwood Boarding House, where staff are required to interact with students in both their educational and personal spaces. The School will ensure that in addition to the above, staff engaged to work at Blackwood Boarding House are appropriately equipped (whether by way of experience, qualifications or training) to manage these complexities in accordance with the School's policies and procedures (including the Blackwood Boarding House Handbook). Above all and at all times, staff engaged to work at Blackwood Boarding House are to ensure a student safe culture, particularly when the safety of a student is so entrusted to the School.

Staff will otherwise be subject to regular supervision, and periodic student safety checks, including to ensure their ongoing suitability for child-connected work.

At least annually, the School will ensure that appropriate guidance and training is provided to Board members and staff about:

1. Individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse and reportable conduct.
2. Child abuse and reportable conduct risks in the school environment (including Blackwood Boarding House).
3. The School's current student safety standards.

Risk management

The School will develop and implement risk management strategies regarding student safety in the school environment (including Blackwood Boarding House). These strategies will identify,

control and mitigate the risk(s) of child abuse and reportable conduct by taking into account the nature of the environment, the activities expected to be conducted in that environment (including the provision of services by contractors or outside organisations), and the characteristics and needs of all students expected to be present in that environment.

Where the School identifies risks of actual or suspected child abuse or reportable conduct occurring in the school environment, it will make a written record of those risks and determine the action(s) it will take to reduce or remove the risks (risk controls).

The School will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls, and update these where required

Child Protection Program

The commitments contained in this Policy are reflected in the School's Child Protection Program, which contains the framework to be followed by staff regarding student safety. This Child Protection and Safety Policy sits at the heart of the Child Protection Program, and underpins every other aspect of the School's student safety strategies, practices, policies and procedures.

The Child Protection Program is accessible to Board members and all staff electronically, and key aspects of the program (such as this Policy) are published on the School's website.

Continual improvement

The School is committed to continual improvement that is responsive to emerging thinking, evidence and practice, so as to eliminate (where practicable) the possibility of student safety risks occurring in the first place. Where the School can improve, it will strive to do so.

Child Protection Responsibilities

Society as a whole shares responsibility for promoting the safety and protection of students from abuse. In the School context, all members of the School community have a role to play.

However, specific responsibilities in respect of student safety are assigned to:

1. The Board
2. The Principal
3. The Executive Leadership Team
4. The School's Student Protection Officers
5. Staff
6. Students and parents

For further information, please refer to the Child Protection Responsibilities document (a copy of which is available on Complispace and the School's website).

Communication

This Policy is available to parents, students and the School community via the School's website.

This Policy is available to staff as part of the Child Protection Program. The Child Protection Program forms part of the School's induction program for incoming staff, and aspects of (and updates to) the Child Protection Program will be addressed in the School's professional development updates, training programs, bulletins and newsletters.

Authorisation and Evaluation

This Policy was authorised by the Principal and the Board in December 2020.

This Policy will be reviewed annually.

Related Policies

Child Protection Staff Code of Conduct

Child Protection Program Definitions

Child Protection Responsibilities

Make a Report Procedure