

# Geelong Grammar School

## Child Safety Policy

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## 1. Introduction

### Our commitment to child safety

Geelong Grammar School (GGS) is committed to the safety of children and has a zero tolerance of child abuse. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously and consistently, in line with the School's robust policies and procedures. GGS wants children to be safe, happy and empowered. The School supports and respects all children, as well as employees and volunteers. GGS is committed to the cultural safety of Indigenous children, children from diverse backgrounds and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

GGS has legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when there is concern regarding a child's safety, and policies to guide the school in doing so, which are followed rigorously (**See Obligation to Disclose Sexual Offence Committed Against a Child 2016 and Mandatory Reporting 2016**). GGS is committed to preventing child abuse through the early identification of risks, and the removal or mitigation of these risks where possible (**See Obligation to Protect Policy 2015**).

GGS aims to foster a culture where all employees, volunteers, contractors and service providers (in addition to parents/carers and children), feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

GGS employs robust human resources and recruitment practices and is committed to training and educating the School community regularly on child abuse risks. We have specific policies, procedures and training in place to support the School community to achieve these commitments.

Child safety encompasses matters relating to the protection of all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

Child abuse includes-

- any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or grooming;
- the infliction on a child of physical violence, or serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- serious neglect of a child.

### Roles and responsibilities

Everyone at GGS has a role to play and is responsible for protecting children and upholding the duty of care that GGS owes to all of its students.

The School has appointed Child Safety Officers at each Campus who are trained to be the first point of contact and to provide advice and support to students, parents, employees, volunteers, contractors and service providers regarding the safety and wellbeing of children within the School. The Principal and School Council are responsible for developing strategies that embed an organisational culture of child safety at GGS and to ensure adherence to this policy. These strategies will give the highest priority to the promotion and protection of a child's safety, health, development, education and wellbeing and will include:

- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at Council meetings
- require the Principal and other responsible staff to report regularly to the Council
- consideration by the Principal, responsible staff members and Council of areas for continual improvement.

## 2. Our Children

We acknowledge children are vital and active participants in the life of GGS. This policy is intended to empower children. Whenever possible, the School involves them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. Employees and volunteers listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

GGS promotes diversity and tolerance in our organisation and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. GGS is a safe environment for all children regardless of place of birth, cultural beliefs and the capabilities of the child. The School understands and accommodates the needs of children from Indigenous and other culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as those of a child with a disability. GGS commits to ensuring that all children can participate equitably in school life and are afforded a safe environment in which to learn and reside.

GGs treats reports made by children seriously and encourages all students to seek support from employees if they, or another child, are at risk of harm or have been harmed.

### 3. Our Employees

This policy outlines the obligations of all GGS employees on how to behave with children whilst performing their required duties. All employees must agree to abide by the GGS **Child Safety Code of Conduct (2016)** which specifies the standards of behaviour required when working with children. Most importantly, employees must report any concerns regarding the safety of students to the Head of Campus, Vice Principal or Principal. **If an employee believes that a student is at risk of immediate harm they should contact the appropriate emergency services by calling 000.**

#### 3.1 Training and Supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everybody at GGS understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility. GGS commits to train employees to identify, assess, and minimise the risk of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

GGs supports employees, through ongoing supervision and training, to develop their skills in identifying potentially harmful situations and to protect children from abuse. In addition, the School commits to equipping employees with the skills required to promote inclusion, cultural safety, respect of diversity and an appreciation of the needs of children with disabilities.

New employees must partake in an induction process so that they recognise GGS's commitment to child safety and understand that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse. In addition, new employees will be supervised regularly to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate, as detailed in the **Child Safety Code of Conduct (2016)**.

Any inappropriate behaviour by any employee will be reported through appropriate channels, including to the Commission for Children and Young People, Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection, Victoria Police and the Victorian Institute of Teaching, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

#### 3.2 Recruitment

GGs values diversity and as such actively encourages applications from, without limitation, Indigenous peoples and people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with disabilities.

Geelong Grammar takes all reasonable steps to employ appropriately qualified people to work with children. In accordance with the **Guidelines for Recruitment and Reference Checks for New Staff (2016)**, the School recognises its legal and ethical obligations in recruiting new employees and ensuring awareness and commitment to child safety.

To this end, print and online media advertisements clearly promote the commitment to child safety to prospective employees and the wider community. The School ensures that the recruitment process, including selection criteria and assessment activity, promotes an awareness of both the employee's and the School's social and legislative responsibilities. As a part of the recruitment process, GGS carries out reference checks which include mandatory questions regarding suitability for working in a school environment and/or directly with children. All employees engaged in child-related work, excluding teachers who hold a current VIT registration, are required to have obtained a Working with Children Check and must provide evidence of this as a condition of employment.

#### 3.3 Fair Procedures for Employees

At GGS, the safety and wellbeing of children are of primary concern; however, the School also has a responsibility to be fair and just to employees. In accordance with the **Guidelines for Recruitment and Reference Checks (2016)** and the **Discipline and Misconduct Policy (2016)**, the decisions the School makes when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

GGs maintains detailed, accurate and confidential records of safety concerns, allegations of abuse and the subsequent investigations. All records are provided to either the Commercial Director for non-teaching employees, or the Principal for all teaching employees and for all other employees whose contracts are signed by the Principal. A copy of all records will be stored securely by GGS. If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, GGS will

provide updates on progress and actions undertaken to the student involved and their family (as is appropriate, unless doing so places the student at greater risk).

## 4. Non-Employee Campus Residents

GGS requires that the family members (and/or friends) of employees, who permanently reside in campus properties, and are aged 18 years or over, must have or undergo a Working with Children Check. New employees need to provide evidence of this prior to taking up residence on campus. If the individual holds valid, current VIT registration, this will suffice. The obligation applies to, but is not limited to, partners and adult children of a School employee. GGS requires that any adult family members (and/or friends) of employees, who reside in a Campus property for more than 3 consecutive days during term time must have or undergo a Working with Children Check.

Overseas or interstate visitors who perform child related work **during school term time** and are not a VIT registered teacher or do not hold a current WWCC are required to complete the *GGS Procedure for Overseas & Interstate Visitors Performing Child Related Work (2017)* before their visit. The responsibility for completing the procedure falls with the hosting GGS person.

Any overseas or interstate visitors either residing in School provided accommodation on Campus and not with a host family during term time or residing with a family on Campus for more than 3 consecutive days during term time must complete the GGS procedure for Overseas & Interstate Visitors Performing Child Related Work (2017).

## 5. Our Volunteers

All people engaged in a voluntary capacity to assist with child-connected activities are required to hold a valid Working with Children Check and must provide evidence of this as a condition of their engagement with the School. Volunteers will receive information and education regarding this policy and their obligations. Volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate, as detailed in the **Child Safety Code of Conduct (2016)**. The School *Volunteer WWCC Procedure for Child Connected Work (2017)* must be adhered to by all School Activity Organisers if volunteers are to be utilised for any child connected activities.

Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported as defined in this and related policy documents. Most importantly, volunteers must report any concerns regarding the safety of students to the Head of Campus, Vice Principal or Principal. **If a volunteer believes that a student is at risk of immediate harm they should contact the appropriate emergency services by calling 000.**

## 6. Our Contractors and Service Providers

Contractors, Service Providers (and their employees) who have a contract to provide goods and/or services (specialist, technical or general) to GGS that involves child-connected work are required to hold a valid Working with Children Check, and must provide evidence of this as a condition of their agreement to provide services to the School. Upon induction to the School environment, Contractors and Service Providers will receive information and education regarding this policy and their obligations relating to Child Safety. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported as defined in this and related policy documents. Most importantly, Contractors and Service providers (and their employees) must report any concerns regarding the safety of students to the Head of Campus, Vice Principal or Principal (directly, or indirectly through the contract coordinator/manager). **If a contractor or service provider believes that a student is at risk of immediate harm they should contact the appropriate emergency services by calling 000.**

## 7. Our External Community

GGS has procedures and policies in place for responding to concerns raised by parents, guardians and other members of the broader school community. All reports of risk to the safety of children will be thoroughly investigated in line with these policies: see **Obligation to Disclose Sexual Offence Committed Against a Child (2016)** and **Mandatory Reporting (2016)**. Members of the external community should direct all concerns to the school's Child Safety Officers or appropriate Head of Campus.

## 8. Privacy

GGS adheres to the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) contained in the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth). All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be employees,

volunteers, parents or children. GGS has safeguards and practices in place, in accordance with its Privacy Statement, to ensure any personal information is protected and stored in accordance with the APPs. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it and who will have access to it.

## 9. Legislative responsibilities

There are a number of relevant pieces of legislation which uphold child protection.

They are:

- *Ministerial Order 870 - Managing the risk of child abuse in schools.*
- Children, Youth and Families Act (2005) (as amended 2014)
- Failure to Disclose (2014)
- The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006)
- Working with Children Act (2005)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005)
- Family Law Act (1975)
- Obligation to Disclose Sexual Offence Committed Against a Child (2015) (see below)
- Mandatory Reporting Policy (2015) (see below)
- Obligation to Protect Policy (2015) (see below)

GGS takes its 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.<sup>1</sup> For further information on disclosing sexual abuse of a child: see **Obligation to Disclose Sexual Offence Committed Against a Child Policy (2016.)**
- **Failure to protect:** Employees of GGS 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.<sup>2</sup> For further information on protecting students from the risk of sexual abuse: see **Obligation to Protect Policy (2015).**
- Any employees who are **mandatory notifiers** must comply with their duties.<sup>3</sup> That is, all registered teachers (including persons granted permission to teach by the Victorian Institute of Teaching and teachers working in non-teaching capacities), doctors and nurses must notify the Department of Health and Human Services if they form the belief that a student is in need of protection from physical or sexual harm. For further information on mandatory reporting: see **Mandatory Reporting Policy (2015).**
- Registered teachers must also comply with the **Victorian Institute of Teaching Code of Conduct** which states that inappropriate conduct with a student, be it physical, sexual or emotional abuse, grooming or neglect can result in a teacher's registration being removed. Any employee who forms a belief that a teacher is in breach of this code of conduct should contact their Head of Campus.

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<sup>1</sup> A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed.

Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence) <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>.

<sup>2</sup> Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence) <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence>.

<sup>3</sup> Mandatory notifiers (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about [how to make a report to child protection](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first) <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first>.

## Relevant GGS Policy Documents

- *GGS Teaching Staff Code of Conduct (2016)*
- *GGS Non-Teaching Staff Code of Conduct (2016)*
- *Privacy Policy (2005)*
- *Discipline and Misconduct Policy (2016)*
- *EEO and Respectful Workplace Behaviour (2016)*
- *Performance Counselling (2016)*
- *Guidelines for Recruitment and Reference Checks for New Staff (2016)*
- *Volunteer WWCC Procedure for Child Connected Work (2017)*
- *GGS Procedure for Overseas & Interstate Visitors Performing Child Related Work (2017)*
- *Reportable Conduct Policy (2018)*

## 10. Risk management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk to their health or safety is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, GGS proactively manages risks of abuse to children.

GGS has risk management strategies in place to identify and assess risks and the School takes steps to minimise child abuse risks. These include, but are not limited to, risks posed by physical environments and online environments.

## 11. Regular review

This policy will be reviewed annually and following significant incidents. Where possible, GGS will ensure that families and students have the opportunity to contribute to the review process. In addition, we endeavour to work with local Indigenous communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with disabilities in the review process.

## 12. Allegations, concerns and complaints

GGS takes all allegations of child abuse seriously and has practices in place to investigate them thoroughly and quickly. GGS employees are trained to deal appropriately with allegations. Employees, volunteers, non-employee residents, external community members, contractors and service providers are encouraged to notify the Head of Campus (or alternative senior management personnel) who will provide guidance regarding the reporting process; however, this does not negate the right for any party to report directly to external agencies should they wish to do so. It is the responsibility of all employees, volunteers, contractors and service providers to ensure that allegations or concerns of child abuse is reported to the Head of Campus (who may make a report on their behalf to the police if required) or directly to the police.

GGS works to ensure all students, families, employees, non-employee residents, volunteers, contractors and service providers know what to do and whom to tell if they observe or reasonably suspect child abuse is occurring or if they notice inappropriate behaviour. We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of child abuse, if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose and mandatory reporting above).

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to a reasonable belief may include:

- A child tells you they have been/are being abused (physically, sexually, emotionally), neglected or groomed
- A child tells you that they know someone who has been/is being abused (physically, sexually, emotionally), neglected or groomed
- When someone else tells you, such as a relative, friend, acquaintance, sibling of the child, that they know or believe that the child has been/is being abused (physically, sexually, emotionally), neglected or groomed
- Your observations of the child's behaviour or development lead you to believe the child has been/is being abused (physically, sexually, emotionally), neglected or groomed
- You observe physical signs of abuse or neglect
- You observe interactions that could represent an attempt by an adult to groom a child.

### 13. Supporting children who disclose or are linked to child abuse

GGS commits to supporting children who are the victim of, or are otherwise involved in, child abuse by:

- Ensuring their immediate and ongoing safety
- Ensuring that their disclosure is handled rigorously, sensitively and recorded accurately
- Ensuring that students understand the legal obligations upon adults to report abuse and the conditions under which confidentiality cannot be maintained; and
- Ensuring that students are linked to appropriate support structures and services which may include parents, family, guardians, Director of Student Wellbeing, Head of House, trusted employees, counselling services and medical employees (nurses, doctors, psychologists etc.).

## Notes for students:

### What does this policy mean for me?

You have the right to be safe at school. Child abuse, which includes physical and sexual abuse of children, will not be tolerated and support structures are in place to assist you if you have been the victim of such abuse. You also have a responsibility to ensure you are not involved in the abuse, including physical or sexual abuse, of another child. You also have a responsibility to report abuse of another student if you have knowledge of it.

### What is physical abuse?

Physical abuse is any form of intentional and unwanted contact with your body or in close proximity to your body. Examples include hitting, pinching, biting, slapping, punching, pushing, tripping, kicking, strangling etc. By law, no one is allowed to physically assault or abuse you.

### What is sexual abuse?

Sexual abuse is the unwanted sexual behaviour of one person upon another person. Examples include kissing, touching of genital areas, breasts or any area of the body with a sexual connotation, oral sex and sexual penetration with a penis or another object, grooming for the purpose of sexual activity.

### What should I do if I have been the victim of child abuse?

Tell an adult whom you trust. This may be a family member or an employee. They will guide you to the appropriate support services and ensure you are safe.

### What should I do if I know of a child/student who is being subjected to child abuse?

If you see something that is not right, inform an employee. This can be done with the consent of the victim or without; the safety of the victim is paramount and while they may be embarrassed or afraid to inform an adult, it is the only way their ongoing safety can be assured.

### Do I have to be sure child abuse has occurred before speaking to an employee or trusted adult?

No. If you believe that someone is at risk of harm, or has been harmed, it is always best to notify an adult who can then look into the matter further.

### If I inform an employee do they have to tell anyone else?

In all situations where a child has been subject to child abuse, including physical or sexual abuse, the employee you tell must report the incident to either the Child Safety Officer or Head of Campus at your campus. Teachers, doctors and nurses are all required by law to notify the Department of Health and Human Services if a child is at risk of physical or sexual abuse. Sexual abuse committed by an adult on a child under the age of 16 must be reported to the police. This is also true of any sexual relationship between a teacher or employee in a position of power and a student. If you are 16 years or older and you are sexually abused by an adult (who is not in a position of power) then you may have the right to request that the matter is not reported to the police, although GGS will actively encourage and assist you to do so. There may also be circumstances where GGS considers it is obliged to report the matter to the police, for instance, because of the identity of the abuser. Further, a mandatory report to DHHS may be made if the adult feels that you are at risk of ongoing harm. Any reports will be handled confidentially and sensitively by the employee involved. You will be kept informed during the process, kept safe from harm and will be linked to the support services you wish to use.

### What will happen to a student if they are the perpetrator abusing another child?

GGS has a zero tolerance approach to child abuse, including physical and sexual abuse of children. A student who is found to be involved in abuse of another child is likely to face serious consequences, including, but not limited to, suspension or expulsion. In the event that a suspension is deemed to be appropriate, it is likely the student will also be required to agree to a number of other measures upon their return to ensure that the same behaviour does not occur in the future.

## Notes for parents/guardians:

### What does this policy mean for me?

Your child has the right to be safe at school and to be protected from the risk of child abuse. Your child also has an obligation to ensure that they do not physically or sexually abuse another child. Your child also has an obligation to report any knowledge of physical or sexual abuse of another child.

### What is physical abuse?

Physical abuse is any form of intentional and unwanted contact with the body or in close proximity to the body. Examples include hitting, pinching, biting, slapping, punching, pushing, tripping, kicking, strangling etc. Under Victorian law, a parent may smack a child but it is illegal to hit a child with anything (e.g. a wooden spoon, a shoe, a belt) or to hit a child so hard that it leaves a mark.

### What is sexual abuse?

Sexual abuse is the unwanted sexual behaviour of one person upon another person. Examples include kissing, touching of genital areas, breasts or any area of the body with a sexual connotation, oral sex and sexual penetration with a penis or another object, grooming for the purpose of sexual gain.

### What should I do if my child has been the victim of child abuse or if I am concerned about a risk to their safety, whilst they are under the school's duty of care?

Immediately notify your child's Head of House, the campus Child Safety Officer, Head of Campus or Vice Principal. They will then investigate your concerns and notify the appropriate external agencies. If you believe a child under the age of 16 years, including your own, has been sexually abused by an adult you have a legal responsibility to ensure the police are notified. An employee of GGS can do this on your behalf if this is what is agreed to by both you and the employee involved.

### What should I do if I know of a child/student who is being subjected to child abuse, or is at risk of child abuse?

As above. You do not need the permission of the alleged victim to notify the school, or the police, if you believe a child has been abused sexually or physically.

### Do I have to be sure child abuse has occurred before speaking to an employee or the police?

No. If you reasonably believe that a child/student is at risk of harm, or has been harmed, it is always best to notify the school. Whilst there are penalties for making deliberately misleading reports, any report made with good intentions is not punishable even if the report turns out to be unsubstantiated.

### If I inform an employee do they have to tell anyone else?

In all situations where a child has been subject to child abuse, including physical or sexual abused, the employee you tell must report the incident to either the Child Safety Officer or Head of Campus at your campus. Teachers, doctors and nurses are all required by law to notify the Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection Unit if a child is at risk of physical or sexual abuse. Sexual abuse committed by an adult on a child under the age of 16 must be reported to the police. This is also true of any sexual relationship between a teacher or employee in a position of power and a student. If the child is 16 years or older and is sexually abused by an adult (who is not in a position of power) then they may have the right to request that the matter is not reported to the police although GGS will actively encourage and assist them to do so. There may also be circumstances where GGS considers it is obliged to report the matter to the police, for instance, because of the identity of the abuser. Further, a mandatory report to DHHS may be made if the adult feels that the child is at risk of ongoing harm. Any reports will be handled confidentially and sensitively by the employee involved.

## **What will happen to a student if they are the perpetrator abusing another child?**

GGS has a zero tolerance approach to child abuse, including physical and sexual abuse of children. A student who is found to be involved in abuse of another child is likely to face serious consequences, including, but not limited to, suspension or expulsion. In the event that a suspension is deemed to be appropriate, it is likely the student will also be required to agree to a number of other measures upon their return to ensure that the same behaviour does not occur in the future.

**Any comments regarding the Child Safety Policy should be directed to the Child Safety Officer at your campus or the Director of Student Wellbeing.**

*Stephen Meek*

*Principal*

*1<sup>st</sup> February 2018*