



4.0 Child Protection and Safety Policy

Rationale

“In the Lutheran school the gospel is to inform all programs, relationships and activities” (LCA and Its School statement). The love of God in Jesus Christ is to govern all that is done, in response to this love, people in the school community are directed to their fellow human beings. Where they love others, they love him. Christ’s promise is that whatever is done for others is done for him. Informed and transformed by God’s creative, redemptive and sanctifying love, God’s people are concerned with the total needs of their fellow human beings (Industrial Relations and the Lutheran school).

The Child Safe program in place at Sunshine Christian School defines power as the capacity to set and care for boundaries. Boundaries are the structures which support human development within community; boundaries may be personal, communal, spiritual, psychological or physical. In Christ, there is an empowerment by the gospel to recognise boundaries and prevent their destructive crossing and to care for those who have been violated. Our responsibility of leadership is to care for professional boundaries through the establishment of structures that protect them. Structures provide for support, examination, and action to ensure that school leaders, staff and students act according to boundaries that help, protect and uphold the dignity, worth and safety of each individual. (Valuing Safe Communities: Statement of values)”

Sunshine Christian School has developed the following Child Protection and Safety Policy. This policy is an overarching document that provides key elements of our approach to protecting children from abuse. It is designed to be communicated through our public website as well as through other mediums such as newsletters, our annual report and in induction and welcome packs for School Council members, staff and volunteers.

Aims

This policy provides the framework for:

- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child protection within the School;
- the creation of a positive and robust child protection culture;
- the promotion and open discussion of child protection issues within the School; and
- complying with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection in Victoria.

Implementation

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Child abuse includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect and a child's exposure to family violence. Sunshine Christian School is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse and demonstrates this commitment through the implementation of a comprehensive Child Protection Program designed to keep children safe.

At Sunshine Christian School we have a zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The School regards its child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture.

Child Safe Principles

The School's commitment to child safety is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse.

1. All children have the right to be safe.
2. The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
3. The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected.
4. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Safety Code of Conduct and Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy.
5. The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.
6. Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our School community.
7. Procedures are in place to screen all staff, volunteers, third party contractors** and external education providers, as all are involved in child-connected work.
** There may be some specific circumstances where a third party contractor may not be screened by the school. If this occurs specific processes will be put in place to ensure that the un-screened contractor will not be left unsupervised in the school grounds at any time.
8. Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
9. Child protection training is mandatory for all School Council members, staff and volunteers.
10. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the School community.
11. All children, especially those who are vulnerable for whatever reason, have a right to care and support.
12. Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
13. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

The *Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)* defines “**direct contact**” as any contact between a person and a child (aged under 18) that involves:

- Physical contact; or
- Face to face contact; or
- Contact by post or other written communication; or
- Contact by telephone or other oral communication; or

- Contact by email or other electronic communication.

Child Protection Program

Sunshine Christian School is committed to the effective implementation of our Child Protection Program and ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated. We adopt a risk management approach by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety risks based on a range of factors including the nature of our School's activities, physical and online environments and the characteristics of the student body.

Our Child Protection Program relates to all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse. It includes:

- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and associated key risk indicators
- clear procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse
- strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, volunteers, third party contractors, external education providers, parents and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child protection matters
- procedures for recruiting and screening School Council members, staff and volunteers
- pastoral care strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe
- policies with respect to cultural diversity and students with disabilities
- a child protection training program
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children
- guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality
- policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Victorian Child Safe Standards)
- a system for continuous improvement and review

As a part of Sunshine Christian School's induction process, all staff and volunteers are required to complete a selection of training modules on the content of our Child Protection Program.

All staff, volunteers and School Council members are provided with additional, ongoing child protection training at least annually.

Staff, volunteers, third party contractors and external education providers are supported and supervised by the School's Child Protection Officers to ensure that they are compliant with the School's approach to child protection.

Responsibilities

Child protection is everyone's responsibility. At Sunshine Christian School all members of the School Council and staff, as well as volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. Specific responsibilities include:

School Council

Each member of the School Council is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the School's Child Protection and Safety Policy and the Child Protection Program to be effectively implemented within the School and are responsible for holding the Principal accountable for effective implementation.

The Principal

The Principal is responsible, and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Protection and Safety Policy and the School's Child Protection Program are implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child protection culture is maintained within the School.

The School's Child Protection Officers

A number of senior staff members are nominated as the School's Child Protection Officers. Our Child Protection Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child protection issues. They are the first point of contact for raising child protection concerns within the School. They are also responsible for championing child protection within the School and assisting in coordinating responses to child protection incidents.

Staff Members

All staff are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the School's Child Protection Officers.

Volunteers

All Volunteers, as defined in this policy, are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Safety Code of Conduct and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse.

It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the School's Child Protection Officers.

Third Party Contractors

All Third Party Contractors (service providers) engaged by the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment.

All service providers engaged by the School are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program.

The School may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the service provider.

Direct Contact Contractors

- those who have direct contact with students during the normal course of their work;
- those who may be in a position to establish a relationship of trust with a student notwithstanding that unsupervised access to students would be rare (for example full-time maintenance personnel); and
- any contractors whom a school is legally required to screen.

The *Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)* defines “**direct contact**” as any contact between a person and a child (aged under 18) that involves:

- Physical contact; or
- Face to face contact; or
- Contact by post or other written communication; or
- Contact by telephone or other oral communication; or

External Education Providers

An external education provider is any organisation that the School has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the School.

The delivery of such a course may take place on School premises or elsewhere.

All external education providers engaged by the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment.

All external education providers engaged by the School are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program.

Sunshine Christian School may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the external education provider.

Reporting Concerns

Our Child Protection Program provides detailed guidance for members of the School Council, staff and volunteers as to how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to one of our School's nominated Child Protection Officers. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.

Students or parents/guardians who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse or grooming are asked to report concerns to one of our School's nominated Child Protection Officers.

Third party contractors, external education providers, students, parents/careers or other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse are asked to contact one of the School's Child Protection Officers.

Communications will be treated confidentially on a “need to know basis”.

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed in keeping with the “Safe Place Policy” of the Lutheran Church of Australia and the LEA “Valuing Safe Communities” documentation.

Date Approved: September 2017
Origin: Complispace
Date for Review: 2020