

Girton Grammar School - Child Protection and Safety Policy

Girton Grammar 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 Board of Directors members, staff and volunteers.

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. Girton Grammar 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 Girton Grammar School we have 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, Direct Contact Volunteers**, third party contractors and external education providers who have direct contact with children.
8. Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility
9. All Board Members, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers must made aware of their Child Protection responsibilities.
10. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the School staff.
11. 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.
12. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

**Direct Contact Volunteers are those volunteers that are involved in providing support, guidance and supervision directly to students and could potentially have direct unsupervised contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service.

Examples of Direct Contact Volunteer activities may include volunteers involved in School camps and excursions, coaching sporting teams or assisting in learning activities.

Child Safe Standards

Ministerial Order 870 outlines the seven Child Safe Standards that organisations must comply with in relation to keeping children safe. The School's Board and leaders are committed to developing and implementing policies and practices to ensure compliance with these standards.

To create and maintain a child safe organisation, organisations must have:

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

Objectives

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

Child Protection Program

Girton Grammar 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 (direct and indirect), third party contractors, external education providers, parents and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child protection matters;
- procedures for recruiting and screening Board of Directors members, staff and Direct Contact 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); and
- a system for continuous improvement and review.

As a part of Girton Grammar School's induction process, all staff and Direct Contact Volunteers are required to complete a selection of training modules on the content of our Child Protection Program.

All staff, Direct Contact Volunteers and Board of Directors members are provided with additional, ongoing child protection training at least annually.

Staff, volunteers (direct and indirect), 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.

Staff Training

Child protection training is mandatory for all Board Members, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers.

Our Child Protection Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child protection issues.

Additional, ongoing child protection training occurs at least annually for all staff, Direct Contact Volunteers and Board Members. This training includes completion of the Complispace Child Safety Training Modules, annual training for teachers in regard to Mandatory Reporting responsibilities, regular reiteration at Staff Meetings of Child Safety Policies, Roles and Responsibilities, and providing access to the School's policies and literature in regard to Child Safe Practices.

Responsibilities

Child protection is everyone's responsibility. At Girton Grammar School all members of the Board of Directors and staff, as well as direct and indirect volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. Specific responsibilities include:

Board of Directors

Each member of the Board of Directors 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 Headmaster and management team accountable for effective implementation.

This occurs through the annual appraisal of the Headmaster and through the implementation of the guidelines stipulated in the Board Members' Handbook as quoted below:

"The Board should review material risk incidents and ensure that appropriate actions are taken. In addition, risk management should be a standing agenda item at Board Meetings.

On a regular basis, a report should come from the Headmaster to Board, signing off that appropriate steps have been taken to comply with risk management policies. The Board can then make appropriate amendments to the plan on an ongoing basis. The Headmaster must therefore be prepared to voice opinions and estimate risk and factors that might influence the degree of risk."

The Headmaster

The Headmaster 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.

Direct Contact Volunteers

All Direct Contact 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.

Indirect Contact Volunteers

Indirect Contact Volunteers (or 'indirect volunteers') are those volunteers who are involved in providing support and services whilst not directly assisting a specific group of students. Indirect contact volunteers are not responsible for supervising students and would not have "unsupervised" contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service.

All indirect volunteers are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment.

All indirect volunteers are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program.

Examples of Indirect Contact Volunteer activities may include assisting with School functions, or the School canteen and fundraising barbeques.

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.

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.

Girton Grammar 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 Board of Directors, staff and Direct Contact 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.

Third party contractors, external education providers, indirect contact volunteers, students, parents/carers 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".

Our Child Protection Officers - Making a Report

Girton Grammar School has appointed the people listed in the table below as the School's Child Protection Officers. Each Child Protection Officer is available to answer any questions that you may have with respect to our Child Protection and Safety Policy and the Child Protection Program.

All staff members and others covered by this policy need to be aware that fulfilling the roles and responsibilities contained in our strategies and procedures does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse.

No staff member is prohibited from keeping their own records in regard to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse.

Child Protection Officers		
Mr Rick McWaters	Head of Pastoral Care	03 54413114
Mr Don Thompson	Head of Junior School	03 44085919
Ms Robin Kurrle	Acting Head of Pastoral Care	03 54413114
Mrs Viv Bath	Deputy Head of Junior School	03 44085919

When to contact a Child Protection Officer

If you have any concern that a child may be experiencing any form of abuse, whether or not you have formed a belief on reasonable grounds that the abuse has occurred, you should immediately raise your concerns with one of our 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. A full Role description for the officers is overleaf.

Child Protection Officers are selected based on a number of considerations, namely:

- Their personal attitudes, experiences and beliefs; for example, a person who is non-judgmental, calm, resilient and demonstrates a high degree of integrity and respect for confidentiality;
- Their role within the School, for example, a person who has seniority and experience working with complex student and family issues at the School and someone who is readily accessible and available to all members of the School community; and
- Their personal profile within the School, for example, a person who is approachable, who students and staff trust and who is willing and able to respond to issues personally and sensitively.

The School's Child Protection Officers are your first point of contact for reporting child protection issues within the School. Their special training that allows them to deal with child protection concerns both sensitively and effectively.

'Child Abuse' includes:

- sexual offences;
- grooming;
- physical violence;
- serious emotional or psychological harm; serious neglect; and
- family violence, or exposure to family violence.

The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount. Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.

Our Senior Child Protection Officer

Girton Grammar School has appointed Mr Matthew Maruff, Headmaster as the School's Senior Child Protection Officer. The Senior Child Protection Officer has an important role in the promotion and maintenance of our child protection culture at the School.

The Senior Child Protection Officer is identified in our publicly available Child Protection and Safety Policy as the contact for the wider community when they have child protection concerns relating to the School.

The Senior Child Protection Officer is contactable by phone on 03 54413114 or by emailing headmaster@girton.vic.edu.au.

Child Protection Officers - Role Description

The Girton Child Protection Officers:

- Act as one of the people that staff, parents/guardians and children contact to discuss a suspected abuse or child safety concern
- Accurately record all relevant information and actions taken
- Securely store all records and information in line with the School's Privacy Policy
- Assess how and when to report to the Headmaster and authorities
- Provide staff with a point of contact for discussion if they develop a belief that a mandatory report is required to be made
- In conjunction with the Wellbeing Team, instigate strategies to make people (adults and children) feel safe and comfortable in reporting suspected abuse
- Ensure that avenues for reporting incidents or concerns are accessible for families and children e.g. on the website and the School's Internal Portal.
- Ensure that the procedures for responding to alleged abuse are fair and focus on child safety
- Are given direct access to the Board Chair in the event that an allegation of abuse has been made against the Headmaster
- Provide support and comfort to a child reporting abuse or safety concerns, and never blame or interrogate a child
- Contact parents/guardians as appropriate
- Ensure processes for responding to suspected child abuse explicitly include culturally appropriate responses where suspected abuse involves an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child
- Use effective and school sanctioned communication channels when making the required contact
- Provide ongoing expertise to make referrals in support of alleged victims, their families and affected staff, such as helping them understand their rights and the process that will be followed in responding to allegations, and assistance in accessing counselling or other support as required
- Provide contact details for internal and/or external expertise so that staff have access to advice when managing child safety incidents, including expertise relating to culturally and/or linguistically diverse children, and children with a disability
- In conjunction with other Senior Staff, undertake timely reviews of child safe policies and procedures to be followed if child abuse occurs
- Support the Headmaster in developing suitable statements or responses to staff, parents and students in the event of an incident of confirmed child abuse
- Develop, in conjunction with the Headmaster, relevant media statements or responses in the event of an incident of confirmed child abuse that is made known to the wider public

- In conjunction with the other Senior School, review organisation responses following an incident to help drive continuous improvement
- In conjunction with the HR Committee , ensure supervision requirements for staff and volunteers who work with children are enforced, maintained and regularly reviewed
- In conjunction with the Wellbeing Team, gather feedback from children eg. surveys, focus groups and social media, about whether they would feel safe and taken seriously if they were to raise concerns, and implements improvements based on this feedback
- In conjunction with the other Senior Staff , include priorities and actions in operational plans that nurture and affirm the involvement of all children in the organisation's activities, and in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with a disability
- Provide culturally safe environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

As a school staff member, you play a **critical role** in protecting children in your care.

- You **must** act, by following the Four Critical Actions, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief* that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.
- You **must** act if you form a suspicion/ reasonable belief, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).
- It is strongly recommended that you use the **Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template** to keep clear and comprehensive notes, even if you make a decision not to report.

*A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

1 RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to **Action 2**.

If a child is at immediate risk of harm you **must** ensure their safety by:

- separating alleged victims and others involved
- administering first aid
- calling **000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance** to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
- identifying a contact person at the school for future liaison with Police.

Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES / REFERRING TO SERVICES

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you **must** report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

Q: Where does the source of suspected abuse come from?

WITHIN THE SCHOOL

VICTORIA POLICE
You **must** report all instances of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor, volunteer or visitor to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report **internally** to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Employee Conduct Branch
- DET Security Services Unit.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Diocesan education office.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or school chairperson
- Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978**.

All allegations of 'reportable conduct' **must** be reported as soon as possible to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

- Employee Conduct Branch

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- Diocesan education office

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978**.

WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION
You **must** report to DHHS Child Protection if a child is considered to be:

- in need of protection from child abuse
- at risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.

VICTORIA POLICE
You **must also** report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report **internally** to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- DET Security Services Unit.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Diocesan education office.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or chairperson.

3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

For suspected student sexual assault, please follow the **Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending**.

OTHER CONCERNS

If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold **significant concerns** for their wellbeing you **must** still act. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from:

- Child FIRST/The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support)
- DHHS Child Protection
- Victoria Police.

Your principal **must** consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:

- not to contact** the parents/carer (e.g. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parent/carer to be contacted)
- to contact** the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion)
- how to communicate** with all relevant parties with consideration for their safety.

4 PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Your school **must** provide support for children impacted by abuse. This should include the development of a **Student Support Plan** in consultation with wellbeing professionals. This is an essential part of your duty of care requirements. Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals and support.

You **must** follow the **Four Critical Actions** every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.



CONTACT

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION AREA
North Division **1300 664 9777**
South Division **1300 655 795**
East Division **1300 360 391**
West Division (Rural) **1800 075 599**
West Division (Metro) **1300 664 9777**

AFTER HOURS
After hours, weekends, public holidays **13 12 78**.

CHILD FIRST
<https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/referral-and-support-teams>

ORANGE DOOR
<https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/the-orange-door.html>

VICTORIA POLICE
000 or your local police station **DET SECURITY SERVICES UNIT**
(03) 9589 6266

STUDENT INCIDENT AND RECOVERY UNIT
(03) 9651 3622

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH
(03) 9637 2595

DIOCESAN OFFICE
Melbourne **(03) 9267 0228**
Ballarat **(03) 5337 7135**
Sale **(03) 5622 6600**
Sandhurst **(03) 5443 2377**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA
(03) 9825 7200

THE LOOKOUT
The LOOKOUT has a service directory, information, and evidence based guidance to help you respond to family violence: <http://www.lookout.org.au>.

Family violence victims/survivors can be referred to **1800 Respect** for counselling, information and a referral service: **1800 737 732**.