



CHILD SAFETY AND PROTECTION POLICY

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework to embed a child-safe culture at Shelford Girls' Grammar. Shelford Girls' Grammar (SGG) is committed to fulfilling its duty of care to all students. This policy is underpinned by the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment Act 2015 (Vic), the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic), and Ministerial Order 870.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all Shelford Girls' Grammar (SGG) Board Members, Staff, Contractors, Volunteers, Visitors, Parents/ Guardians, Students over 18 years of age and any other members of the Shelford Community engaged in activities with students. For the purpose of this Policy, Student Teachers and Work Experience Students are considered to be Volunteers.

3.0 Policy

Shelford Girls' Grammar is committed to child safety and has zero tolerance for child abuse. SGG actively works to listen to and empower children, and has systems to protect children from abuse.

Through the application of this policy, the School aims to:

- Support and respect all children, as well as staff and volunteers;
- Be committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children;
- Ensure all reasonable steps are taken so that students are safe from abuse, including sexual abuse, and they feel safe at all times;
- Have zero tolerance of child abuse, and treat all allegations and safety concerns very seriously and consistently with mandatory and legal reporting requirements;
- Be committed to preventing child abuse through the early identification of risks, and removing and reducing these risks;
- Have robust human resources and recruitment processes for all staff and volunteers;
- Have robust contractor and visitor management processes in place to minimise risk associated with use of external providers;
- Provide clear guidelines in a Code of Conduct for Board Members, Staff, Contractors and Volunteers regarding expectations when interacting with students and other children;
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- Ensure that children with a disability, or vulnerability, are safe and can participate equally; and
- Have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support the Board, Staff, Contractors and Volunteers to achieve these commitments.

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This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants at the School and involve students when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them, listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse, telephone 000.

3.1 Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Board to ensure SGG has the appropriate policies, procedures and culture in place to both:

- Safeguard against the risk of child abuse; and
- Respond effectively if abuse is suspected or confirmed.

SGG takes the legal responsibilities for child safety seriously, including:

- The failure to disclose;
- The failure to protect;
- Obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme, and
- Mandatory reporting requirements.

Legal responsibilities and internal and external reporting processes, (including obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme), are documented within the Mandatory Reporting Policy which is communicated to Board Members, Staff, Contractors, and Volunteers and available on the School's website and intranet.

The Board will:

- Approve the Child Safety and Protection Policy (this Policy) and Code of Conduct;
- Ensure risk management processes are in place that are effective in detecting and preventing child abuse; and
- Monitor compliance to legislation and requirements of Ministerial Order 870.

The Principal will:

- Ensure that Board Members, Staff, Contractors, and Volunteers are aware of relevant laws, and the School's policies and procedures (including this Policy, Mandatory Reporting Policy, the Reportable Conduct Scheme, and Code of Conduct);
- Ensure that Board Members, Staff, Contractors and Volunteers engaged in child related work are aware of their obligation to observe the Code of Conduct and sign the Code of Conduct;
- Provide support for Staff, Contractors and Volunteers in undertaking their child protection responsibilities;
- Identify people within the school who are responsible for promptly managing the school's response to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse, responding appropriately, and monitoring the school's overall compliance with reporting procedures (referred to as Child Safety Officers);
- Deal with and investigate reports of child abuse, including reporting to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) if appropriate; and
- Ensure that adults within the School community are aware of their obligation to report suspected sexual abuse of a child under 16 years to the police.

The Head of Senior School, Junior School and ELC will:

- Act as SGG Child Safety Officers;
- Promote child safety;

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- Assess the risk of child abuse within their area of control and eradicate / minimise any risk to the extent possible;
- Educate staff and volunteers about the prevention and detection of child abuse, mandatory reporting requirements and the Reportable Conduct Scheme; and
- Facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities.

Staff, Volunteers and Contractors share in the responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse, and must:

- Agree to conform with the relevant laws, the Code of Conduct, Child Safety and Protection Policy (this policy) and Mandatory Reporting Policy, and comply with all requirements;
- Report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities (such as the police and / or DHHS Child Protection) and fulfil their obligations as mandatory reporters (Refer Mandatory Reporting Policy);
- Report any suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to the Principal, or Head of Senior School, Junior School or ELC (SGG Child Safety Officers);
- Report any reasonable belief that an employee, contractor, or volunteer has engaged in reportable conduct or misconduct that may involve reportable conduct; and
- Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety.

Parents/Guardians and Students 18 years and over will:

- Be aware of the Child Safety and Protection Policy (this policy) and the related Mandatory Reporting Policy; and
- Understand their obligations to report a reasonable belief of child sexual abuse to the police.

3.2 Code of Conduct

Board Members, Staff, Contractors (engaged for child related work) and Volunteers must agree to abide by the Code of Conduct (SGG-FOR-030-1) which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. The Code of Conduct lists what is acceptable behaviour and what is unacceptable. It is a straightforward guide of behavioural dos and don'ts.

Board Members, Staff and Parents/Guardians, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Code of Conduct.

Board Members, Staff, Contractors (engaged in child related work) and Volunteers are required to sign the Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct is available, published and communicated to all relevant people.

3.3 Recruitment

SGG undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for Staff and Volunteers which includes aims to:

- Promote and protect the safety of Students;
- Identify the safest and most suitable people who share SGG's values and commitment to protect children; and
- Prevent a person from working at SGG if they pose a risk to children.

SGG requires all Staff and Volunteers pass SGG's recruitment and screening processes prior to commencing their engagement with the School. Refer to the Recruitment Policy and Volunteer Policy for further information.

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Persons applying for a role as a teacher with the School must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching and provide a current police check. Teacher registrations are checked by the Principal at regular intervals. Records of teacher registrations are kept on Synergetic and are verified annually by the Principal (or her delegate).

Non-teaching Staff, Volunteers, and Contractors engaged in child-related work, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this. (Refer to the Volunteer Policy and Contractor and External Provider Policy). Working with Children Checks (WWCC) are checked by the Principal at regular intervals. Records of WWCC are kept on Synergetic.

SGG undertakes thorough reference checks as part of recruitment of staff as per the Recruitment Policy.

Once engaged, Staff, Contractors and Volunteers must review and acknowledge their understanding of this Policy through signing the Code of Conduct.

3.4 Induction and Professional Development

The Induction and Professional Development Policy describes the inclusion of child safety requirements in Staff induction and professional development including:

- Legislative changes surrounding child safety;
- Identifying, assessing, and minimising risks of child abuse and detecting potential signs of child abuse; and
- Reporting suspected child abuse (including mandatory reporting requirements and obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme).

The Volunteer Policy and Contractor and External Provider Policy describes the processes in place for ensuring Volunteers and Contractors have awareness around child safety requirements including identification and reporting requirements.

3.5 Visitor Management

Visitors to the School are required to sign in and out of reception, and be provided with a Visitors' badge. Visitors to the School may include, but not limited to, parents attending school tours, job applicants attending interviews or external consultants assessing or quoting on maintenance work.

Visitors are escorted by an SGG staff member and are not left unsupervised on site.

Visitors who are engaging with Students are considered a Volunteer or Contractor and must obtain a WWCC. (Refer Volunteers Policy and Contractor and External Provider Policy.)

3.6 Supervision

New Staff and Contractors are supervised regularly to ensure they understand SGG's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. (Refer Code of Conduct).

Volunteers are supervised by an SGG staff member. (Refer Volunteer Policy and Supervision Policy).

3.7 Responding to Incidents

The Mandatory Reporting Policy describes the process to report suspected child abuse, and the process to report any reasonable belief that an employee, contractor, or volunteer has engaged in reportable conduct or misconduct that may involve reportable conduct.

Incidents will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Victoria Police and the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP), depending on the severity and urgency of the matter. (Refer Mandatory Reporting Policy).

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If DHHS or Victoria Police decide to conduct an investigation of a report of child abuse, all Board Members, Staff, Contractors, or Volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation. If it is alleged that a member of the Board, Staff, Contractor or a Volunteer may have committed an offence, or engaged in reportable conduct or misconduct that may involve reportable conduct, or have breached the School's policies or the Code of Conduct the person concerned may be stood down (with pay, where applicable) while an investigation is conducted.

If the investigation concludes that on the balance of probabilities an offence (or a breach of the School's policies or Code of Conduct) has occurred then disciplinary action may follow, up to and including dismissal or cessation of involvement with the School. The findings of the investigation will also be reported to any external body as required. (Refer Mandatory Reporting Policy).

3.8 Fair Procedures for Personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is the School's primary concern. The School is also fair and just to personnel. The decisions that are made when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence. (Refer Complaints and Grievances Policy).

3.9 Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. SGG have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected, as required by privacy laws. (Refer Mandatory Reporting Policy, Records Management Policy and Privacy Policy).

3.10 Risk Management

SGG will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach. (Refer Risk Management Policy and associated processes.) SGG have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical onsite environments, online environments, and offsite environments including camps, excursions, overseas tours, school sport activities, and events.

SGG has a Risk and Governance Board sub-committee committed to identifying and managing risks at the School. Board members will receive regular training in relation to child safety.

3.11 Strategies to promote child empowerment and participation

SGG has simple and accessible processes that help children understand what to do if they want to report abuse.

SGG has developed strategies to deliver age appropriate education about standards of behaviour for students, healthy and respectful relationships (including sexual), resilience, and child abuse awareness and prevention. These strategies include the MYTERN program, Quærite program, pastoral care program, health curriculum and restorative practices.

SGG recognises that children from culturally diverse backgrounds or with a disability may require specific care and support regarding child safety issues, and implement strategies to achieve this through effective risk management processes.

3.12 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed for effectiveness:

- As part of SGG's policy review schedule (refer SGG Document Management Policy);
- As required, with changes to current legislation, research, policy and best practice;

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- Following issues raised through the Complaints and Grievances Policy; and
- Upon receipt of staff and parent/guardian feedback.

4.0 Definitions

Child. For the purpose of the relevant parts of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.), a child is any person 17 years of age or younger.

Child Protection. The Victorian Government agency, provided by DHHS, that protects children at risk of significant harm. Child Protection has statutory powers and can use these to protect children.

Child Abuse: All forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial (e.g. for financial gain) or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a child.

Mandatory report. A report made to Child Protection, by a person mandated under the Act, that is based on a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection from physical injury that results from abuse or neglect or harm caused as a result of sexual abuse.

Mandatory reporter. Person(s) required under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.) to make a report to the Child Protection if they believe a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse. Mandatory reporters include registered school teachers or Principals and registered nurses.

Reasonable belief. A reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection is more likely formed in circumstances where:

- a child states that they have been physically injured or sexually abused (self-disclosure);
- a child states that they know someone who has been physically injured or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about him or herself);
- a relative, friend, acquaintance or sibling of the child states that the child has been physically injured or sexually abused;
- professional observations of the child’s behaviour or development lead the mandated professional to form a belief that the child has been physically injured or sexually abused;
- signs of physical injury or sexual abuse lead to a belief that the child has been abused.

5.0 References

- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
- Crimes Act 1958
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment Act 2015 (Vic)
- Ministerial Order 870
- <http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafepages/default.html>
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010:
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 4: Staffing Arrangements
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007

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- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (Vic)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)

6.0 Related Documentation

- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Induction and Professional Development Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Recruitment Policy
- Volunteer Policy
- Risk Management Policy
- Camps, Excursions and Events Policy
- Contractor and External Provider Policy
- Records Management Policy
- Document Management Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Complaints and Grievances Policy
- FAQs – Reportable Conduct Scheme

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