



Child Safety

at

Mildura Christian College

Mildura Christian College is a child safe school. We are committed to ensuring that the children who attend our school are safe and protected. Our goal is to maximise learning and fulfil potential for all our students in a Christian environment that is nurturing, comfortable, inspiring and, above all, as safe, secure and compassionate as possible. This, we believe, is how children best learn, grow and flourish.

Summary Document

1. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this summary document is to outline Mildura Christian College's approach to child safety and to communicate that to the wider school community. This includes to provide child safety policy and procedural direction for all of the College community in alignment with the College's Mission, Vision and Philosophy.

2. DUTY OF CARE

School staff and volunteers have a duty of care to protect the safety, health and wellbeing of children in their care. This includes issues relating to sexual, physical and emotional abuse, as well as serious neglect. If a staff member or volunteer has concerns about the safety, health and wellbeing of children in their care they must take immediate action.

3. CONTEXT AND LEGISLATION

The policy has been developed in line with the Victorian legislative context, including the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

To create and maintain a child safe organisation, the standards require that the College must have the following:

- **Standard 1:** Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements
- **Standard 2:** A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety
- **Standard 3:** A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
- **Standard 4:** Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
- **Standard 5:** Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
- **Standard 6:** Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
- **Standard 7:** Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

In complying with the Child Safe Standards, the College must include the following principles as part of each standard:

- Promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children
- Promoting the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Promoting the safety of children with a disability.

Mildura Christian College, at all levels of Governance, management and care, with the implementation of the above standards will maintain utmost vigilance to ensure that all students and all children who form part of the College environment, whether in a physical or digital capacity are protected at all times and in all circumstances from any harm that may come to them, where it is within the capacity of Mildura Christian College and its stakeholders to do so.

The policy is also consistent with national child protection frameworks, namely the **National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020** and is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

4. FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

MILDURA CHRISTIAN COLLEGE has zero tolerance for child abuse. Child abuse of any kind; physical, verbal, sexual, emotional or neglect is never acceptable.

MILDURA CHRISTIAN COLLEGE considers that all staff, volunteers, contractors, regular visitors and students over 18 years old have a moral obligation to report child safety concerns, irrespective of mandatory reporting responsibilities.

MILDURA CHRISTIAN COLLEGE is committed to the emotional, physical, cultural and spiritual wellbeing of children and recognises its moral and legal responsibility to ensure the safety of all children attending the school. Mildura Christian College's commitment to child safety is based on the following key concepts:

- The abuse of children is morally and legally wrong and is never the child's fault.
- Prevention of child abuse is the responsibility of all adults associated with Mildura Christian College, including all teachers, employees and volunteers.
- Creating a child safe environment is the responsibility of all adults involved in an organisation;
- Raising concerns about the safety of children does not require conclusive evidence of harm; a reasonable belief that a child is at risk, is sufficient to take action.

Mildura Christian College is committed to the empowerment of children and young people and recognises that empowered and aware children and young people are more likely to speak up or provide an indication of discomfort or concern.

Mildura Christian College is committed to respectful communication with children and families at all times. Mildura Christian College recognises that respectful communication is critical to ensuring a school culture which promotes child safety.

Mildura Christian College is committed to empowering and enabling volunteers and employees to actively contribute to building a culture of child safety. Mildura Christian College recognises that empowered and enabled volunteers and employees are critical to a child safe culture.

Mildura Christian College is committed to responding to concerns of child abuse and neglect in a robust, timely and child-focused manner. More broadly, Mildura Christian College is committed to establishing and maintaining an organisational culture of child safety which means all stakeholders (employees, volunteers, children, parents and carers) feel confident to raise concerns. In doing so, Mildura Christian College aims to prevent harm before it occurs.

Mildura Christian College is a risk-focused organisation and is committed to regularly reviewing all of its activities to assess possible risks and apply mitigation strategies.

Mildura Christian College is a learning organisation. Where child safety concerns do arise, Mildura Christian College is committed to examining incidents to determine if changes to policy, procedure or process are required.

5. EMPOWERMENT

Mildura Christian College will support, encourage and enable school staff, parents/guardians, and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters.

Mildura Christian College will actively promote the engagement and participation of children and young people in matters related to child safety and create opportunities for them to 'have their say' about issues that are most important to them.

The College will always listen to and act on any concerns children, or their parents/guardians, raise.

6. EMPLOYMENT

Mildura Christian College undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process which aims to:

- Promote and protect the safety of all children under the care of the organisation;
- Identify the safest and most suitable people who share the College's values and commitment to protect children;
- Prevent any person from working at the College if they pose a risk to children;
- Monitor and review checks of all Board members, staff, volunteers, visitors and contractors, including Working with Children Checks; Victorian Institute of Teaching registration or equivalent checks; National Police Checks.

Mildura Christian College requires all staff and volunteers to pass through the organisation's recruitment and screening processes prior to commencing their engagement with the College. Persons applying for a role as a teacher with the College must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching. Non-teaching staff and volunteers are required to obtain a **Working with Children Check (WWCC)** that is linked to the College prior to their employment at the College and may be asked to complete a National Police Check prior to engaging with the College.

All regular visitors and onsite contractors who participate in activities at Mildura Christian College must hold a valid WWCC that is linked to the College.

Staff and Volunteers are to acknowledge and sign the College's "*Child Safety Code of Conduct*" document annually.

Staff and volunteers are aware that they are accountable to their peers, supervisors and ultimately, God. As a result of introducing the Child Safe Standards into the College, staff are alerted to risks and are responsible to voice any concerns to their supervisor.

7. IDENTIFYING AND MANAGING RISKS OF CHILD ABUSE

Mildura Christian College will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach. This approach is used to inform our policy, procedures and activity planning.

The College will ensure that the identification and management of child safety related risks in all school environment/s, including physical and online is included as part of the College's risk management

processes. As part of this process the Principal or delegate will continually review risks and critical incidents to ensure mitigation strategies are put in place and learning is utilised to improve child safety.

Mildura Christian College is committed to intervening early and supporting students at risk, in order to prevent escalation. All College staff and volunteers are expected to follow internal reporting procedures if they are concerned a student may be at risk, even if there is no evidence or disclosure of abuse.

As a school, we must make sure that students believed to be at risk are protected, cared for and comforted.

If a person has concerns about the child's health, wellbeing, safety, stability, or development, they should follow the reporting procedures as set out in section 12 of the College's full Child Safety Policy.

8. CONSIDERING DIVERSITY

In considering the diversity of the College community, it is important that steps are taken to ensure that the child and the child's family understand the situation and are supported.

Some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers in reporting allegations of abuse. For example, people from some cultures may experience anxiety when talking with police and communicating in English may be a barrier for some. We need to be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible, such as having an interpreter present (who could be a friend or family member).

If an allegation of abuse involves an Aboriginal child, we need to ensure a culturally appropriate process/response. A way to help ensure this could include engaging with parents of Aboriginal children, local Aboriginal communities or an Aboriginal community controlled organisation to review policies and procedures.

Some children with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident. For example, children with hearing or cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident, including through sign language interpreters. Advice on communicating with people with a disability can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services website.

9. REPORTING CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS

IF A CHILD IS IN DANGER OR AT IMMEDIATE RISK OF ABUSE:

TELEPHONE

000

or

CHILD PROTECTION

1300 655 795 (b/h)

13 12 78 (a/h)

Mandated Notifiers:

The Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic), section 64 (1C), states that certain professionals, including teachers, school nurses and Principals, must make a report to the Department of Human Services (Child Protection Services). If in the course of their professional duty:

- they form the belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection because the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical injury and the child's parents or caregiver have not protected, or are unlikely to protect the child from harm

OR

- the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of sexual abuse and the child's parents or caregiver have not protected or are unlikely to protect the child from harm.

If you are a mandatory reporter, failure to notify your belief, when you have reasonable grounds, is an offence under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 and may incur penalties.

Further information on how to make a report to Child Protection Services can be found the College's full Child Safety Policy. Child Protection is a statutory service provided by DHS to protect children and young people at risk of harm and provide supports for families to ensure these risks are mitigated.

Moral Obligation to Report

All staff, volunteers, contractors, regular visitors and students over 18 years old of **Mildura Christian College** have a *moral obligation* to report child safety concerns, irrespective of mandatory reporting responsibilities.

Failure to Protect

Any staff member in a position of authority, who becomes aware that an adult associated with their organisation (such as an employee, volunteer, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the care, authority or supervision of the College, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk

**Failure to Disclose
Sexual Abuse**

The Victoria Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014 requires that

ALL ADULTS (Over 18)

MUST

report to the VICTORIA POLICE

If they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child in Victoria

Failure to do so constitutes an offence and penalties may apply

Further information about child safety at Mildura Christian College can be found in the College's full ***Child Safety Policy***