

## **Child Safety Responding and Reporting Policy**

Policy No. 1030

### **1) RATIONALE**

- a) Grace Christian College Wodonga is committed to providing a safe, supportive and nurturing environment for all students. Every child has the right to feel safe, to be safe, and to be heard. The College has zero tolerance for child abuse and is committed to responding to child safety concerns in a way that prioritises the wellbeing and best interests of children at all times. All staff have both a moral and legal responsibility to respond appropriately to concerns, disclosures or suspicions of child abuse or harm.

### **2) PURPOSE**

- a) This policy outlines the College's approach to responding to and reporting child safety concerns. It explains legal reporting obligations, internal processes, and how the College applies the Victorian Government's Four Critical Actions when child abuse or risk of abuse is identified.

### **3) SCOPE**

- a) This policy applies to all members of the College community, including teaching staff, leadership, support staff, contractors, volunteers and any other adults who have contact with students.

### **4) POLICY STATEMENT**

- a) Child safety is a shared responsibility. Any person who forms a reasonable belief that a child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, or who receives a disclosure or observes concerning behaviour, must take immediate action in accordance with this policy and Victorian law. The College is committed to creating a culture of openness, accountability and child empowerment.

### **5) CHILD EMPOWERMENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

- a) The College supports children to understand their rights and encourages them to speak up if they feel unsafe or have concerns. Age-appropriate education is provided to help students recognise unsafe situations and seek help. Families are supported to understand the College's child safety policies and reporting pathways and are encouraged to partner with the College to promote child safety and wellbeing.

### **6) EQUITY AND INCLUSION**

- a) Grace Christian College Wodonga recognises that some children are more vulnerable to abuse and require additional safeguards. The College is committed to providing a culturally safe and inclusive environment for all students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disabilities, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and students of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations.

### **7) LEGAL OBLIGATIONS**

- a) All staff must comply with relevant child safety legislation and frameworks, including mandatory reporting obligations, failure to disclose and failure to protect offences, grooming offences, the Child Safe Standards, information sharing schemes, and the Reportable Conduct Scheme. See Appendix 1.

8) **CHILD SAFETY IN PHYSICAL AND ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS**

- a) The College actively manages risks to child safety across all environments, including classrooms, playgrounds, excursions, camps and online spaces. Professional boundaries are enforced at all times, including in digital communication, and grooming behaviours are not tolerated.

9) **STAFF RECRUITMENT, SCREENING AND SUPERVISION**

- a) The College undertakes appropriate screening and suitability checks for all staff and volunteers, including Working With Children Checks. Clear role descriptions, induction processes and supervision arrangements support a child-safe culture.

10) **STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES AND TRAINING**

- a) All staff are required to understand and comply with this policy and the College's Code of Conduct. Regular training is provided to ensure staff understand their reporting obligations and how to respond to child safety concerns.

11) **REQUIRED ACTION: FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS**

- a) Grace Christian College Wodonga requires all staff, volunteers and contractors to follow the Victorian Government's Four Critical Actions whenever there is a concern, disclosure or suspicion that a child has been abused or is at risk of abuse. These actions are Identify, Support, Refer and Report, and may occur simultaneously or in a different order depending on the circumstances.
  - i) **Identify:** Staff must remain alert to indicators of child abuse and harm. Identification may occur through a disclosure, observations, information from others, or emerging patterns of concern. Concerns must be recorded factually and objectively.
  - ii) **Support:** When a child discloses abuse or a concern is raised, the immediate priority is the child's safety and wellbeing. Staff must respond calmly and respectfully, avoid investigative questioning, and ensure appropriate support is provided.
  - iii) **Refer:** Where concerns do not meet the threshold for statutory child protection, the College may refer matters to The Orange Door for child and family wellbeing support. The Orange Door operates alongside Child Protection and does not replace statutory reporting requirements.
  - iv) **Report:** All legal reporting obligations must be met immediately. Mandatory reporters must report to DFFH Child Protection when required by law. All adults must report sexual offences against children to Victoria Police. Allegations involving staff, volunteers or contractors must be reported under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

12) **INTERNAL REPORTING AND GOVERNANCE**

- a) Staff must notify the principal as soon as possible after a concern is identified. Where a concern involves the principal, the matter must be reported to the Chair of the School Board. The principal is responsible for ensuring reports are made and risks are managed.

**13) RECORD KEEPING**

- a) All child safety concerns, disclosures and actions taken must be documented promptly, objectively and confidentially, and stored securely in accordance with the school's Child Safety Records Management Policy.

**14) CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

- a) The College regularly reviews child safety practices and policies, analyses incidents and outcomes, and seeks feedback from students, families and staff to strengthen its child safety framework.

**15) REVIEW**

- a) This policy will be reviewed at least every two years, or earlier if required due to legislative or regulatory changes.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **LEGAL OBLIGATIONS**

#### **1) Mandatory Reporting**

- a) Mandated reporters (teachers, principals, school counsellors) must report to Child Protection (DFFH) when they form a reasonable belief that a child:
  - i) has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm due to physical or sexual abuse, and
  - ii) the parent/carer has not protected, or is unlikely to protect, the child

#### **2) Failure to Disclose**

- a) All adults must report to Victoria Police any reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child under 16.

#### **3) Failure to Protect**

- a) Leaders must take reasonable steps to reduce or remove risks of sexual abuse where they have authority to do so.

#### **4) Grooming**

- a) The College prohibits grooming behaviours and enforces strict professional boundaries, including in online environments.

#### **5) Reportable Conduct Scheme**

- a) All allegations of child-related misconduct by staff, volunteers, or contractors must be reported to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP).

**ENDORSEMENT**

<b>Created date</b>	April 2026
<b>Last Review</b>	-
<b>Consultation</b>	School Administration Team and School Board
<b>Endorsed by</b>	Grace Christian College Wodonga Board
<b>Endorsed on</b>	20/4/2026
<b>Board Chairman</b>	Matthew Hood
<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Next review date</b>	1/4/2027