

CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY

Policy No. 1091

1) Rationale

- a) Grace Christian College is a Christian college that conducts the entirety of its affairs in accordance with its Statement of Faith, which outlines God's good purposes for his people and how Christians are to live their lives in obedience to Him. All policies flow from the College's Statement of Faith.
- b) This policy establishes the College's approach to implementing Ministerial Order 1359 of the Victorian Education and Training Reform Act 2006.

2) Purpose

- a) The Grace Christian College Wodonga Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our school's commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.
- b) This policy provides an overview of our school's approach to implementing Ministerial Order 1359 (PDF, 363KB) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.
- c) It informs our school community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

3) Scope

- a) This policy:
- b) applies to all school staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to school Board members where indicated.
- c) applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided for a student's use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers
- d) should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes - refer to the related school policies section below.

4) Definitions

- a) The following terms in this policy have specific definitions available on the department of education website at this link - <https://www.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards-definitions>:
- b) child
- c) child safety
- d) child abuse
- e) child-connected work
- f) child-related work
- g) school environment
- h) school boarding environment
- i) school staff
- j) school boarding premises staff
- k) school governing authority
- l) school boarding premises governing authority

- m) student
- n) volunteer.

5) Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

- a) Grace Christian College is a child safe organisation and is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. We are committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse and have established strategies, practices, policies and procedures to implement this commitment.
- b) We have zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. We regard our child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, are committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture for our students.
- c) Attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as sexually diverse (this includes sexual orientation and gender identity) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.
- d) Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our school has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.
- e) We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

6) Roles and Responsibilities

- a) Our school leadership team, comprising the principal, assistant principal, curriculum coordinator, IBDP coordinator, VCE VM coordinator, learning support coordinator and IT coordinator, are responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.
- b) The College Board oversees the implementation of College policy and all Board members will complete annual Child Safety and Protection training. The Principal will report to the Board matters relating to child safety and the implementation of the Child Safety Standards at the monthly Board meeting.
- c) The school's Principal is the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.
- d) The school's Assistant Principal, as the Student Behaviour Manager, will respond to reports or concerns relating to bullying, abuse, racism or other harmful behaviours in accordance with the school's child safety and wellbeing policies. This response will include a timely and fair process of gathering information by speaking with students involved, including those who have experienced harm, witnesses and those alleged to have engaged in the behaviour. The purpose of this process is to assess the situation, ensure the safety and wellbeing of students, and determine appropriate actions, supports and follow-up in line with the school's duty of care and child safety obligations.
- e) Through the weekly staff meetings, the Principal will work with staff at all levels to ensure that a child safe culture is embedded throughout the College.
- f) Staff and volunteers must adhere to the College's Staff Code of Conduct and will receive training in this policy and its expectations at induction and reviewed through Professional Development Days and the regular staff meetings.
- g) Staff will receive training in their obligations on information sharing and record keeping in regard to child safe matters. This training will be conducted through Professional Development Days and the regular staff meetings.

7) Child Safety Code of Conduct

- a) Our Child Safety Code of Conduct (Policy 1062b) sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.
- b) We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school.
- c) The Child Safety Code of Conduct (Policy 1062b) also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

8) Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing

- a) At Grace Christian College we identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site overnight camps, adventure activities and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.
- b) Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our school leadership team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

9) Creation of a Safe Environment

- a) The College aims is to create an environment that aligns with its Statement of Faith and Vision and Mission Statements where students can receive a Christian education that is reflective of those principles.
- b) In accordance with its beliefs, the College recognises that all students are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26) and are, therefore, valued by God. Thus, they should be valued highly and safe-guarded by staff, their peers, visitors to the College, and family members. The care and protection of children is also a key principle in the teachings of Jesus Christ, who reserved His most severe condemnation for those who 'cause a child to stumble 'or hinder them. The policies and procedural strategies we implement are the practical expression of our faith in Christ and desire to be faithful to His teachings.
- c) The College promotes acceptance of students from diverse cultures by teaching students that all people are created by God in His image and therefore have inherent worth and value. All members of the community will be encouraged to respect others and their differences.
- d) The College promotes acceptance of all students including Aboriginal students by:
 - i) including in the curriculum, lessons and experiences containing knowledge and understandings about the peoples and cultures of the world and how, although there are differences, there are many similarities.
 - ii) including in the curriculum, lessons and experiences containing knowledge and understandings that enable students to appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture.
 - iii) Provide training to staff on the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and students.
 - iv) Participating in activities provided through national events such as NAIDOC week.
- e) The college will actively engage with all parents, including those of Aboriginal students, seeking ways the school can support their children and maintain their safety. This will occur through informal opportunities and meetings which can be requested by parents at anytime but also takes place in the scheduled parent-teacher interviews which occur twice a year. Where teachers have concerns for students wellbeing, they must contact parents and initiate a meeting or discussion, or take action according to the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Policy if circumstances require that.

- f) The College encourages students to create a supportive College culture through its Help, Encourage and Respect motto and Thank You Card program which promotes a positive, respectful, inclusive culture by highlighting occasions when students exhibit these behaviours.

10) Student Empowerment

- a) The College will embed in the curriculum, knowledge and understandings relating to the rights of individuals to safety, information and participation in College life and the wider community.
- b) The College promotes a strong sense of community with high expectations of respectful behaviour between individuals to create social cohesion, and will seek to be responsive to the concerns of children and young people in regard to the College's culture.
- c) We inform students of their rights through the school's learning programs and we ensure our students know who they can talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult any time.
- d) The school has established a Student Representative Council (SRC) which provides a forum for students to express their thoughts and concerns about the school and to contribute to ideas for school improvement.
- e) The College will provide opportunities for students to actively participate in schooling through a variety of projects to allow for individual student interest and capacity. Among these will be class projects, sporting events, activity days, Chapel services, assembly presentations, art show, Movie Making day among others. The staff will promote a culture of active participation and will monitor student's involvement.

11) Family engagement

- a) Our families and the school community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.
- b) To support family engagement, at Grace Christian College we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.
- c) We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.
- d) We do this by:
 - i) Welcoming parent feedback on the school's operations and the learning programs through parent meetings, discussions with administration staff and direct access to the principal.
 - ii) Making our child safety policies and procedures available for students and parents on our school Compass portal.
 - iii) Sending newsletters and Compass push notices which inform families and the school community about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.
 - iv) PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school in classrooms and shared spaces

12) Diversity and equity

- a) Grace Christian College recognises and celebrates the rich diversity of its students, families and community. We promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. We recognise that our students have diverse needs and live in different circumstances and will seek to support students as individuals and ensure they are included in the College community.
- b) We pay particular attention to individuals and groups with additional needs including Aboriginal children and young people, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children and young people with disabilities, children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence and children who identify as sexually diverse (this includes sexual orientation and gender identity) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability.

- c) To achieve this we:
 - i) maintain information regarding student learning and personal characteristics in a documented student profile which allows staff to be informed of student needs on an ongoing basis.
 - ii) hold student Learning Support meetings with our Learning Support Co-ordinator and all relevant parties (e.g. parents, carers, case workers etc.)
 - iii) provide a school counsellor who can meet with students and parents and provide additional support.
 - iv) Have zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and take action if such behaviour is identified.
 - v) Provide training to staff on understanding diversity and how to support inclusion and cultural safety.

13) Suitability of Employees and Training

- a) The College will ensure that staff are suitable for Child work by checking applicant referees, training and education and previous work history.
- b) The College will ensure that staff will receive ongoing support to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice through induction procedures, professional development and training experiences which include regular staff meetings and presentations.
- c) The College will maintain a register of staff with WWCCs and VIT registration and regularly check the status of these registrations to ensure they are current at all times.
- d) When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:
 - i) sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching registration.
 - ii) collect and record:
 - (1) proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
 - (2) the person's history of working with children
 - (3) references that address suitability for the job and working with children.
- e) Staff Training
 - i) The College will support its staff and volunteers with training to effectively implement the organisation's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and related policies. Training will be completed during induction of new employees and through regular professional development days and staff meetings.
 - ii) The training staff receive will enable them to recognise indicators of child harm including harm cause by other children and young people and will enable them to build a culturally safe environment for children and young people.

14) Complaints and reporting processes

- a) Grace Christian College fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.
- b) We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our school's Complaint Policy. Policy 1021 Complaints and Grievances Policy can be found on our Compass portal in our school documentation folder. This policy can also be found on our school website [here](#).
- c) If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff, volunteers and Board members must follow our CHILD SAFETY RESPONDING AND REPORTING POLICY which can be found on our Compass portal in the school documentation folder. This policy can also be found on our school website [here](#).
- d) Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school.

- e) As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, we will ensure our school follows:
 - i) the [Four Critical Actions](#) for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child
 - ii) the [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending
- f) Our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and Bullying Prevention Policy cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours. The policies are available in our Compass portal in the school documentation folder.

15) Communications

- a) Grace Christian College believes that families are the primary social unit ordained by God and parents have the ultimate responsibility and authority over their children. The College will therefore ensure it involves parents in decisions affecting their child.
- b) Information regarding the College's Child Safe policies and approach to Child Safety will be communicated to the College community through publications, the College's Management Software (Compass), posters, assemblies and other presentations to students including class lessons.
- c) The College will include the College community in its review of policies and practices and give consideration to parent and student feedback on actions taken.
- d) Information regarding the College's operations and governance will be included in College publications and the College website.

16) Privacy and information sharing

- a) Grace Christian College collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws. For information on how our school collects, uses and discloses information refer to the school's privacy policy which is available on Compass

17) Records management

- a) We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the Department of Education and Training's policy: [Records Management - School Records](#)

18) Review of child safety practices

- a) At Grace Christian College we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.
- b) We will:
 - i) review and improve our policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident
 - ii) analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice
 - iii) act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community.
 - iv) Consult with the school community members and receive and analyse feedback from them.

19) Related policies and procedures

- a) This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related school policies, procedures, and codes. These include our:
 - b) Bullying Prevention Policy
 - c) Mandatory Reporting Policy
 - d) Child Safety Code of Conduct
 - e) Complaints Policy
 - f) IT Policy
 - g) Inclusion and Diversity Policy
 - h) Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
 - i) Visitors Policy
 - j) Volunteers Policy

20) Policy status and review

- a) The school board delegates responsibility for the implementation of this policy to the Principal. The Principal is also responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at least every two years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers, and the school community.

21) Endorsement

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| Created date | May 2016 |
| Last Review | April 2026 |
| Consultation | School Leadership Team, School Board, SRC, School Community |
| Endorsed by | Grace Christian College Wodonga Board |
| Endorsed on | 20/4/2026 |
| Board Chairman | Matthew Hood |
| Signature | |
| Next review date | 1/4/2027 |