



St. Gerard's Child Safety Statement

St. Gerard's Primary School is committed to providing a safe environment for all students and will take active steps to protect them against abuse. To achieve this the school has developed and actively enforces Child Safety Strategies to ensure that any person involved in 'child connected work' is aware of their obligations & responsibilities for ensuring the safety of all children under their care.

In accordance with requirements of the [Victorian Government's Ministerial Order No 870](#), St. Gerard's Primary School maintains a culture of 'no tolerance' to child abuse. To achieve this it has established a holistic Child Safety Strategy incorporating the processes, policies & procedures listed below.

St. Gerard's Primary School Child safety Strategy includes, but is not limited to the:

1. Establishment of strategies for embedding a culture of child safety at the school.
2. Maintenance & communication of a policy affirming the school's commitment to child safety and the promotion of an environment where children feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential.
3. Maintenance & implementation of a Child Safety Code of Conduct.
4. Established processes for screening, supervision, training, and other human resource practices to reduce the risk of child abuse & promote a child safe learning environment.
5. Maintenance & Communication of procedures for responding to and reporting child safety complaints, suspected abuse, disclosures or breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct.
6. Risk Management strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse.
7. Maintenance of strategies to promote student participation & empowerment in creating an environment where they feel respected, valued and are capable of reaching their full potential.

Scope

St. Gerard's Primary School Child Safety Standards apply to any individual employed by the school, employed under contract, volunteers or contracted service providers. Failure to comply with any aspect of the school's Child Safety Standards may result in criminal proceedings in accordance with the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)*, the *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.)* and the recommendations of the *Betrayal of Trust Report 2013*.

Definitions

Child: Any child or young person enrolled as a student at the school.

Child Connected Work: Work authorised by the school's Principal, members of the Leadership Team or Board performed by an adult in the school environment while children are present or are reasonably expected to be present.

Child Abuse: Includes:

- a. Any Act committed against a child involving:
 - i. A sexual offence
 - ii. An offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
- b. The infliction, on a child of:
 - . Physical violence
 - i. Serious emotional or psychological harm
- c. Serious Neglect of a child.

Child Neglect: The failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child, where they are in a position to do so, with conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and wellbeing.

Child Physical Abuse: Generally, child physical abuse refers to the non-accidental use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Physically abusive behaviours include shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning. The fabrication or induction of an illness by a parent or carer (previously known as Munchausen syndrome by proxy) is also considered physically abusive behaviour.

Child Protection: Statutory services designed to protect children who are at risk of serious harm.

Child Sexual Abuse: Any sexual activity between a child under the age of consent (16) and an adult or older person (i.e. a person five or more years older than the victim) is child sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse can also be:

- Any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult in a position of power or authority over them (e.g. a teacher); the age of consent laws do not apply in such instances due to the strong imbalance of power that exists between young people and authority figures, as well as the breaching of both personal and public trust that occurs when professional boundaries are violated.
- Any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult family member, regardless of issues of consent, equality or coercion.
- Sexual activity between peers that is non-consensual or involves the use of power or coercion.
- Non-consensual sexual activity between minors (e.g. a 14-year-old and an 11-year-old), or any sexual behaviour between a child and another child or adolescent who, due to their age or stage of development, is in a position of power, trust or responsibility over the victim. Sexual activity between adolescents at a similar developmental level is not considered abuse.

Child Safety: Encompasses matters relating to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

Mandatory Reporting: The legal requirement to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect is known as mandatory reporting. Mandated persons include teachers, nurses, police, psychologists, psychiatrists and medical practitioners.

Reasonable Belief: When a staff member is concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child, they must assess that concern to determine if a report should be made to the relevant agency. This process of considering all relevant information and observations is known as forming a

‘reasonable belief’. A ‘reasonable belief’ or a ‘belief on reasonable grounds’ is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation. A ‘reasonable belief’ is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

School Environment: Any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school for use by a child during or outside of school hours including:

- a. A campus of the school
- b. Online school environments, including email & intranet systems
- c. Other locations provided by the school for a child’s use including school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, school community and other events.

School Staff: Any individual working in the school environment who is:

- a. Directly engaged or employed by the school Principal or Board
- b. A volunteer or contracted service provider
- c. A minister of religion.

Our School’s Commitment to Ensuring Child Safety

All students enrolled at St. Gerard’s Primary School have the right to feel safe. The wellbeing of students will always be our school’s first priority. The school aims to create a child safe environment where children feel valued & respected by committing to the following arrangements for students, parents, carers, staff members, clergy, volunteers and contractors.

Our Commitment to our Students

- We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all students enrolled in our school.
- We commit to providing students with positive and nurturing experiences.
- We commit to listening to students and empowering them by taking their views seriously, and addressing any concerns that they raise with us.
- We commit to taking action to ensure that students are protected from abuse or harm.
- We commit to teaching students the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing.
- We commit to seeking input and feedback from students regarding the creation of a safe school environment.

Our Commitment to Parents and Carers

- We commit to communicating honestly and openly with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children.
- We commit to engaging with, and listening to, the views of parents and carers about our child-safety practice, policies and procedures.
- We commit to transparency in our decision-making with parents and carers where it will not compromise the safety of children or young people.
- We commit to acknowledging the cultural diversity of students and families, and being sensitive to how this may impact on student safety issues.
- We commit to continuously reviewing and improving our systems to protect children from abuse.

Our Commitment to our School Employees, Clergy, CRTs, Volunteers & Contractors

1. We commit to providing all staff members, clergy, casual relief teachers (CRTs), volunteers and contractors with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles. This will include regular and appropriate learning opportunities.
2. We commit to providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm policy and procedures in relation to child safety and the protection of students and young people. This will include regular briefings and annual training in the principles and intent of the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct, and staff responsibilities to report concerns.

3. We commit to listening to all concerns voiced by staff members, students, caregiver's clergy, volunteers, and contractors about keeping children and young people safe from harm.
4. We commit to providing adequate resources to support staff members and all stakeholders in meeting their Child Safety obligations.
5. We commit that the Principal and St. Gerard's Primary School Leadership Team will further promote child safety and support all members of the school community to understand, meet and exceed their Child Safety obligations.
6. We commit to providing support to any member of the school community who reports a child safety complaint, suspected abuse, disclosure or breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct.
7. We commit to providing opportunities for staff members, clergy, CRTs, volunteers & contractors to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.

Minor review: July 2017

Major review: July 2020