



River City Christian College

Where Every Child Matters



College POLICY

Child Safe Policy

Updated 20/07/2022

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

River City Christian College is a child safe organization and is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students. This is not just a response to our legal obligation but the outworking of our moral and Christian values that underpin the college.

We aim to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our college environment.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our college environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular 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 lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) 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 college, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our college has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

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.

WHY DO WE NEED NEW LAWS AND PRACTICES?

Inquiry Into Child Abuse Recent enquiries into child abuse in Australia revealed the immense damage done in lives and communities when individuals and institutions fail in their responsibility to protect children. The 'Betrayal of Trust' report detailed these findings and included a range of recommendations for doing more to prevent and respond to child abuse in our community. It was tabled in Parliament on 13 November 2013.

THE CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

One result of the report was the Victorian Government's decision to introduce substantial legislative changes including Ministerial Order No. 1359 which mandates schools to adhere to minimum standards known as The Child Safe Standards.

Their purpose is to drive continuous improvement in the way we:

- promote child safety;
- prevent child abuse; and
- ensure there are proper responses to child abuse allegations.

Schools are required to consider all aspects of child safety and put measures in place to protect children from all forms of abuse including:

- sexual or grooming offences
- physical violence
- serious emotional or psychological harm
- serious neglect.

There are eleven child safe standards applicable to all schools.

Standard 1

Establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued

Standard 2

Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in the leadership, governance and culture

Standard 3

Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

Standard 4

Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing

Standard 5

Equity is upheld, and diverse needs respected in policy and practice

Standard 6

People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice

Standard 7

Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused

Standard 8

Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training

Standard 9

Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed

Standard 10

Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved

Standard 11

Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people

In complying with the child safe standards, three principles must be applied to each standard. These are:

- 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.

We invite your questions and input

To make enquiries about child safety at the College, to contribute to our child-safe policy reviews, or make suggestions to further improve our child-safe environment, please contact the Principal/Child Safety Champion on 5482 4594.

PURPOSE

The Child Safety Policy and the Student Welfare Policy demonstrate our College's commitment to creating and maintaining an environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe

The policy provides an overview of our College's approach to implementing [Ministerial Order 1359](#) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

It informs our College 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.

SCOPE

This policy:

- applies to all college staff, volunteers and contractors whether they work in direct contact with students or not. It also applies to College Council members, where indicated.
- applies in all physical and online college environments used by students during or outside of college hours, including other locations provided by the College for a student's use, (eg: camps, excursions, co-curricular activities) and those provided through third party providers
- should be read together alongside our other child safety and welfare policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related policies section below.

DEFINITIONS

The following terms in this policy have [specific definitions](#):

- child
- child safety
- child abuse
- child-connected work

- child-related work
- school environment
- school boarding environment
- school staff
- school boarding premises staff
- school governing authority
- school boarding premises governing authority
- student
- volunteer

RIVER CITY CHRISTIAN COLLEGE BOARD

In performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, the College Board members will:

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at college board meetings
- undertake annual training on child safety, NOTE: school councils can use the Child Safe Standards School Council Training slide presentation available on [PROTECT](#).
- approve updates to, and act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to college board employees and members
- when appointing college board employees, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe. At River City Christian College, this responsibility is delegated to the principal and his delegates, who are bound by this policy.
- Ensure consultation and feedback is sought from the parent and student community in the development of the policies surrounding child safety

COLLEGE MANAGEMENT

The College's Management is 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.

The Management Team will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed
- model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students
- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the college community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and college board meetings
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of responding to abuse
- create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

COLLEGE STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the College, and always follow the College's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- act in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct Policy, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) and the Four Critical Actions for Student Sexual Offending
- Report any suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to college management (or, if management is involved in the suspicion, report to the Board Chairman or Board member)
- Where you have developed a reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk, ensure that a report is made to the relevant authorities (such as the police and / or the child protection service) and where applicable, fulfil your obligation as a mandatory reporter (see: Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct Policy)
- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.
- provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety.

SPECIFIC CHILD SAFETY RESPONSIBILITIES

College Chaplain and Homeroom teachers are responsible for coordinating responses to child safety incidents and as such must also ensure that they:

- Facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities. The Homeroom teacher, College Chaplain and College Safety Champion together, will ensure the necessary internal reporting takes place and provide guidance and support for any required external reporting such as to the Police or the appropriate child protection service. Including the College Chaplain in the report, enables the College to apply a consistent approach to both the reporting obligations and the care of the student. It is important to recognise that this reporting does not mean that the individual's

responsibility to both act and report has been met and they must take reasonable steps to ensure that they are satisfied that any reporting that they feel should have occurred, based on the incident, is conducted.

- Have procedures in place for responding to allegations of suspected child abuse in accordance with the requirements of Ministerial Order 1359 and other legal obligations such as mandatory reporting and the Crimes Act (Grooming, Failure to Disclose and Failure to Protect offences), and are proficient with its practice.
- Manage information sharing requirements and protocols under both the Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes

Please refer to the Mandatory Reporting & Reportable Conduct Policy for further reporting details and obligations.

Our Principal, as our **Child Safety Champion** is the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries. In addition, the Child Safety Champion is responsible for:

- Monitoring the College's compliance with the Child Safety Policy, the Student Welfare Policy and other associated Child Safety policies.
- Informing the College community about this policy, and making it publicly available
- Our College has committed to meet once a term with the Child Safety Champion, Homeroom Teachers and Student Representative Council members to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing and provide input to the Child Safety Risk Register.

CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct 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.

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.

MANAGING RISKS TO CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING

At River City 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.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside any risk controls and actions put in place to manage those risks.

Students also sign an Internet Usage Agreement that outlines the ways in which they can protect and report any unsafe environments.

ESTABLISHING A CULTURALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT

At River City Christian College, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

STUDENT EMPOWERMENT

To support child safety and wellbeing at River City Christian College, we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

We inform students of their rights through specific curriculum programs in Health classes, give them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers. We ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time. We will endeavour to include excursions and incursions such as the Daniel Morcombe Foundation.

When the college is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct or abuse of a child, we will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously, check our understanding of the complaint, support the student and keep them (and their parents and carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Our families and the College community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, at River City 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. (See Communication Policy)

We will continue to 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.

We do this by:

- Seeking input from families through our regular communication on our website, newsletter and specifically through our opinion survey and student wellbeing survey and parent specific emails. Specific feedback on Child Safety is received via these various platforms.
- Child safety policies and procedures are available for students and parents on the College Website.
- The College uses the regular newsletters to inform families and the College community about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.
- Child Safety posters are displayed across the College and students are regularly made aware of the expectations on their right to a safe environment

DIVERSITY AND EQUITY

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- 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
- international students
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Our Welfare Policy provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

SUITABLE STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

At River City Christian College, we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

STAFF RECRUITMENT

River City Christian College undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all workers and volunteers 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 River City Christian College's values and commitment to protect children; and
- Prevent a person from working at River City Christian College if they pose a risk to children.

River City Christian College requires all staff/volunteers to pass through the organisation's recruitment and screening processes prior to commencing their engagement with River City Christian College which includes the collection and recording of:

- proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
- the person's history of working with children
- references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

Persons applying for a role as a teacher with River City Christian College must be registered with Victorian Institute of Teaching and are not required to hold a Working with Children Clearance.

Excluding teachers, all people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Clearance and to provide evidence of this Clearance. Please see the [Working with Children](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website (www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) for further information. A WWCC Register is maintained.

River City Christian College may require applicants to provide a police check in accordance with the law and, as appropriate, before they commence working at River City Christian College and during their time with River City Christian College at regular intervals. The College may also verify a person's history of work involving children and may require appropriate references that address each person's suitability for the job and working with children.

River City Christian College will undertake thorough reference checks as per the approved internal procedure.

STAFF INDUCTION

All newly appointed staff will be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program will include a focus on:

- the Child Safety Policy (this document)
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- the Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct Policy and
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that college leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

ONGOING SUPERVISION AND MANAGEMENT OF STAFF

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

The College conducts ongoing monitoring and assessing of a job occupant's continuing suitability for child-connected work through our annual staff development reviews and our 6 month new staff reviews.

New staff and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our College'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. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

SUITABILITY OF VOLUNTEERS

All volunteers are required to comply with our Volunteers Policy, which describes how we assess the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing induction and training, and supervision and management.

CHILD SAFETY KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND AWARENESS

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our staff will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- our school's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices
- completing the [Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#) online module annually
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment.

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing, for example, training for our volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

COLLEGE BOARD TRAINING AND EDUCATION

To ensure our College Board is equipped with the knowledge required to make decisions in the best interests of student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our college environment, the council is trained at least annually. Training includes guidance on:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse
- child safety and wellbeing risks in our college environment
- the College's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices

COMPLAINTS AND REPORTING PROCESSES

River City Christian College fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the College 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.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our college's Grievance Policy.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including the College Board) must follow our Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct Policy. 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.

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, we will ensure our school follows:

- the [Four Critical Actions](#) for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child
- the [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending

Our Student Welfare Policy covers complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

COMMUNICATIONS

River City Christian College is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the college community through:

- ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on our website including the Child Safety Policy, the Student Welfare Policy, the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct Policy
- displaying Child Safety posters, codes of conduct and information on student rights around the school
- updates in our school newsletter and parent portal
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at college leadership meetings, staff meetings and College Council meetings.

PRIVACY AND INFORMATION SHARING

River City 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 College collects, uses and discloses information refer to the College's Privacy Policy.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards, including minimum retention periods and the Records Retention Schedule for Non-Government Schools.

REVIEW OF CHILD SAFETY PRACTICES

At River City Christian College, we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

- review and improve our policy every 2 years, after any significant child safety incident or when there have been changes in the relevant laws and regulations which affect this Policy.
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with college staff and our college community.

RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This Child Safety Policy and Welfare Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related school policies, procedures, and codes. These include our:

- Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Grievance Policy
- Internet Agreement
- Welfare Policy
- Visitors Policy
- Volunteers Policy

CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

River City Christian College is committed to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly environment, where children and young people are safe and feel safe. It is vitally important that we are diligent ambassadors for child safety as an expression of our Christian values and ethos.

AIMS

This Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, college policies and procedures, and professional standards, codes, or ethics as these apply to staff and other personnel.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Principal and College leaders of River City Christian College will support implementation and monitoring of the Code of Conduct, and will plan, implement and monitor arrangements to provide an inclusive, safe and orderly school including other learning environments such as camps and excursions. They will also provide information and support to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively. All staff, contractors, volunteers, Board members and any other member of the College community involved in child-related work are required to comply with the Code of Conduct by observing expectations for appropriate behaviour below. The Code of Conduct applies in all school situations, including school camps and in the use of digital technology and social media.

ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the College community involved in child-related work, we are each responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- Upholding the College's Child Safety Code of Conduct and adhering to the College's Child Safe Policy
- Treating students and families in the College community with respect both within the College environment and outside the College environment as part of normal social and community activities
- Listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child
- Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability
- Reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the College leadership Team
- Understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse
- If child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the College community involved in child-related work we must not:

- Ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions, or disclosures of child abuse
- Develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, offering gifts)
- Exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as abusive and not justified by the educational, therapeutic, or service delivery context
- Ignore behaviours by other adults towards students when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate
- Discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental guidance, delivering the education curriculum or a therapeutic setting
- Treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, or ethnicity.
- Communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to schoolwork or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter
- Photograph or video a child in the college environment except in accordance with college policy or where required for duty of care purposes
- In the College environment or at other College events where students are present, consume alcohol contrary to college policy or take illicit drugs under any circumstances.

By observing these standards you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to Leadership/Child Safety Champion.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Teaching staff at River City Christian College are also bound by the Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct has been developed for and by the Victorian teaching profession. It identifies a set of principles which describe the professional conduct, personal conduct and professional competence expected of a teacher by their colleagues and the community. If you breach this Child Safety Code of Conduct you will face disciplinary action, including and up to termination of employment or cessation of engagement with River City Christian College.

By observing these standards, you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to River City Christian College Principal or other nominated Child Safety Champion of the College.

I have read, understood and accepted the River City Christian College Child Safe Policy and this Code of Conduct. I accept the standards and expectations of the Board, leadership, staff, volunteers and contractors at River City Christian College as detailed in the Child Safe Policy and agree to adhere to this Code of Conduct:

Name:

Signature:

Date:
