



CHILD SAFE POLICY

This document was approved by Board August 2021

Reviewed every two years

Introduction

A founding theological belief of Donvale Christian College (the 'College') is that parents have been called by God to raise their children. The College seeks to honour the role of parents and support them as they seek "to perform their task with constant prayer that the Spirit may enable them to be good instruments in His hands for bringing the children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Educational Creed).

The College is committed to providing a safe environment for all children. Our example of God as a father, nurturing his children throughout their life journey through his provision of love and guidance is an image of God as the supreme 'care giver'. Jesus speaks very strongly on the value and care of children in a number of places throughout the scriptures. This establishes the foundation that the College is a community that work together in partnership to establish a safe and supportive environment for all children in its care, enhancing learning opportunities and fostering spiritual, emotional, social and academic development.

Because the character of a Christian school is called to be faithful and just, school leadership has the authority and obligation to ensure that the College environment is a safe place for all children, free of child abuse, discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment/abuse, vilification, victimisation and bullying. The College takes a strong, active stand on Child Safety.

Donvale Christian College has developed the following Child Safe Policy. This policy is an overarching document that provides key elements of our approach to protecting children from abuse.

The policy forms the foundation of the College's procedures, practices, decision-making processes and ultimately the College's culture with respect to child safety.

The College's Child Safe Policy is approved and endorsed by the College Board and is regularly reviewed by the Board.

Our Child Safe Policy

Objectives

This policy provides the framework for:

- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child protection within the College;
- the creation and ongoing commitment to implementation of a positive and robust child protection culture;

- the promotion and open discussion of child protection issues within the College; and
- compliance with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child safety in Victoria.

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Donvale Christian College is committed to providing a child safe and child friendly environment, where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and are able to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.

At Donvale Christian College we have zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The College regards its child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture.

Child Safe Values & Principles

The College's commitment to child safety is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse.

1. All children have the right to be safe.
2. The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
3. In all matters relating to a child's views and privacy, the College acts in the best interests of the child.
4. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Safe Code of Conduct and Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policies.
5. The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.
6. Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our College community.
7. Procedures are in place to screen all staff, Direct Contact Volunteers**, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers so that only people of good character have direct contact with our students.
8. Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
9. Annual child protection training is mandatory for all College Board directors, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers.
10. Procedures for responding to and reporting alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the College community.
11. Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
12. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

***Direct Contact Volunteers are those volunteers who are involved in providing support, guidance and supervision directly to students and could potentially have direct contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service.*

The *Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)* defines '**direct contact**' as any contact between a person and a child (aged under 18) that involves:

- *physical contact; or*
- *face to face contact; or*
- *contact by post or other written communication; or*
- *contact by telephone or other oral communication; or*
- *contact by email or other electronic communication.*

Examples of Direct Contact Volunteer activities may include volunteers involved in College camps and excursions, coaching sporting teams or assisting in learning activities.

Child Protection Program

Donvale Christian College is committed to the effective implementation of our Child Protection Program and ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated. We adopt a risk management approach by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety risks based on a range of factors including the nature of our College's activities, physical and online environments and the characteristics of the student body.

Our Child Protection Program relates to all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse. It includes:

- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and associated key risk indicators;
- clear procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse;
- strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, parents and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child protection matters;
- procedures for recruiting and screening College Board directors, staff, Direct Contact Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers so that only people of good character have direct contact with our students;
- procedures for reporting reportable conduct and/or misconduct;
- pastoral care strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe;
- policies with respect to cultural diversity and students with disabilities;
- a child protection training program which staff must complete on an annual basis;
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children;
- guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality;
- policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Victorian Child Safe Standards); and
- a system for continuous review and improvement.

As a part of Donvale Christian College's induction process, all staff, College Board directors and Direct Contact Volunteers complete the Child Protection training module on the content of our Child Protection Program on an annual basis.

Staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers are supported and supervised by the College's **Child Protection Officers** to ensure that they are compliant with the College's approach to child protection.

Responsibilities

Child protection is everyone's responsibility. At Donvale Christian College all directors of the College Board and staff, as well as Volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. Specific responsibilities include:

College Board

Each director of the College Board ensures that appropriate resources are made available to allow the College's Child Safety Policy and the Child Protection Program to be effectively implemented within the College and responsible for holding the Executive Principal and Senior Leadership Team accountable for effective implementation.

The Executive Principal

The Executive Principal is responsible and accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Safety Policy and the College's Child Protection Program are implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child protection culture is maintained within the College.

The College's Child Protection Officers

A number of senior staff members are nominated as the College's Child Protection Officers. Our Child Protection Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child protection issues. They are the first point of contact for raising child protection concerns within the College. They are also responsible for championing child protection within the College and assisting in coordinating responses to child protection incidents.

Staff Members

All staff and Music Contractors must be familiar with the content of our Child Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the College's Child Protection Officers.

Direct Contact Volunteers

All Direct Contact Volunteers, as defined in this policy, must be familiar with the content of our Child Safe Policy, our Child Protection Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse.

It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the College's Child Protection Officers.

The College does not engage any volunteer under the age of 18 years (except for work experience students with prior approval by the Head of Primary/Secondary).

Indirect Contact Volunteers

Indirect Contact Volunteers (or 'Indirect Volunteers') are those volunteers who are involved in providing support and services whilst not directly assisting a specific group of students.

All Indirect Volunteers are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

All Indirect Volunteers must be familiar with our Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct.

Examples of Indirect Contact Volunteer activities may include assisting with College administrative functions.

Third Party Contractors

All Third Party Contractors (service providers) engaged by the College contribute to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

Third Party Contractors include, for example, maintenance and building personnel, consultants, and College cleaners.

This also includes music teachers and other extra-curricular teachers and instructors who are engaged by students and their families directly, rather than the College, but have an agreement with the College to use the College's facilities.

All Third Party Contractors engaged by the College must be familiar with our Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct.

The College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the Third Party Contractor.

External Education Providers

An External Education Provider is any organisation that the College has engaged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the College.

The delivery of such a course may take place on College premises or elsewhere (including overseas trips).

All External Education Providers engaged by the College contribute to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

All External Education Providers engaged by the College must be familiar with our Child Safe Policy and our Child Protection Program.

Donvale Christian College will include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the External Education Provider.

Reporting Child Protection Concerns

Our Child Protection Program provides detailed guidance for directors of the College Board, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers as to how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to one of our College's nominated Child Protection Officers. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.

Staff, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, Volunteers, students, parents/carers and other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse or grooming are asked to contact one of the College's nominated Child Protection Officers.

Communications will be treated confidentially on a "need to know basis".

Investigating Child Protection Concerns

The College is not responsible for investigating allegations of child abuse, these investigations are undertaken by the relevant authorities. Any investigation that the College undertakes in relation to an allegation of child abuse is for the purposes of identifying and removing the risk of child abuse at the College.

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.

Policy & Program Review

Donvale Christian College is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Protection Program. The Program is regularly reviewed for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child protection related laws, regulations and standards.