

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

RATIONALE

Child Protection at Torrens Valley Christian School is based upon the Biblical values of freedom and justice for all people, and an underpinning belief in the dignity and uniqueness of every human being.

Torrens Valley Christian School strives to be a child safe school and has a strong commitment to the implementation of a safe and well-ordered learning environment, creating a sense of belonging and well-being for the students in its care. We believe learning and personal development are enhanced in such a culture.

While we recognise education is relational and interactive, we understand we have a Duty of Care to our students, ensuring every possible effort is made to protect their safety and well-being while attending school or taking part in activities authorised by the school. It is recognised that the primary responsibility for a child's care and protection lies with the child's family, and, while at school, staff act in *locos parentis*. However, the school's legal responsibility of Duty of Care is paramount to all Child Protection matters.

This policy is intended to direct both staff and volunteers in their work with students at the school. It provides in writing, details of the processes and procedures relating to the appropriate conduct of Torrens Valley Christian School staff, volunteers and students that accord with legislation applying in South Australia and the care and protection of children. It also includes guidelines for preventative and proactive practices.

Torrens Valley Christian School aims to build and foster a genuinely protective environment for all students framed upon the *TVCS Educational Creed* and *Focal Points*.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

The school is committed to the safety of children and young people in line with the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*. This includes taking responsibility for:

- Ensuring that children and young people are valued, respected, and encouraged to participate and that the safety and protection of children and young people is always the first priority.
- Ensuring that our school complies with the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*, *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016* and the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*.
- Ensure that TVCS complies in full with the *Statutes Amendment (Child Sexual Abuse) Act 2021 (SA)* taking a preventative, proactive and participatory stance on child protection issues where the safety and wellbeing of children is the paramount consideration.
- Upholding equity and embracing the diversity of children and young people regardless of their abilities, sex, gender, or social, economic, or cultural background.
- Ensuring that bullying and harassment will not be tolerated.
- Displaying information about services that can assist children and young people (such as the Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800 and Youth Helpline on 1300 13 17 19) in areas accessed by them.
- Requiring teachers and the Principal to report to the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL), any suspicion on reasonable grounds that a student has been or is being harmed or at risk of harm.

Torrens Valley Christian School acknowledges that being safe and supported at school is essential for student wellbeing, development, and effective learning. The safety and wellbeing of our children and young people are a paramount consideration in all that we do.

We acknowledge the vulnerability of children and young people in our care and take a proactive, preventative, and participatory approach to protecting them through:

- The on-going development of a positive, child safe culture.
- The development, implementation and monitoring of rigorous policies and procedures.
- Seeking to ensure that everyone is aware of their responsibilities, vigilant and, if required, prepared to respond in an appropriate and timely manner.

We are committed to:

- Supporting the rights of the child as set out in the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*.
- Acting without hesitation to seek to ensure a child-safe and child-focused environment is maintained at all times.
- Valuing and embracing the opinions and views of children and young people.
- Abiding by all legislative and regulatory obligations and striving for our practices to be regarded as best practice and 'beyond compliance'.
- Empowering children and young people with the skills and knowledge to keep themselves and others safe.
- Taking whatever necessary action is required to protect children and young people from physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological harm or risk of harm.

DEFINITIONS

A child or young person is a person under 18 years of age.

A student is any person regardless of age who is enrolled at the school.

A member of staff is anyone employed on a casual or permanent basis to provide the services of Torrens Valley Christian School - including teachers, administration and non-teaching staff, grounds, and maintenance staff.

Complainant is a person who makes a complaint.

Harm - Section 17 of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA)* defines 'harm' to mean physical or psychological harm (whether caused by an act or omission), including harm caused by sexual, physical, mental or emotional abuse or neglect.

National Police Check is a summary of an individual's offender history in Australia and a record of their criminal history relating to convictions, finding of guilt, or pending court proceedings. They are available from South Australia Police (SAPOL) or organisations accredited by the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission.

Working with Children Check - People working or volunteering with children in South Australia must, by law, have a valid, not prohibited Working with Children Check. A Working with Children Check is an assessment of whether a person poses an unacceptable risk to children. As part of the process, the Screening Unit will look at criminal history, child protection information and other information.

At Risk: The *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA)* states that a child or young person is considered to be at risk if they:

- Have suffered harm.
- Are likely to suffer harm; or
- Are likely to be removed from the state for illegal purposes (such as marriage or female genital mutilation).

SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, parents/carers, children and young people and other individuals involved with the school, whether on a regular or occasional basis.

It applies:

- On the school premises.
- At functions, excursions, trips, or camps organised by the school.
- When members of the school community are representing the school.

Copies of the school's Child Protection policies and procedures are readily available to all members of the community on our website or on request and form part of the induction process for employees and volunteers.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. A clear and accessible child safety policy

The Torrens Valley Christian School Child Protection Policy is a clear and accessible statement of intent in regard to the school's commitment to being a highly regarded Child Safe School through promoting children and young people's wellbeing and safeguarding all children and young people from harm.

The policy is underpinned by the guiding principles of the National Safe Schools Framework and addresses the requirements of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, as well as the National Quality Framework, Legislative and School Registration requirements.

The development of the policy has been a consultative process involving a wide cross section of the school community. As part of the annual review, at the beginning of the year, the policy will be appraised by the Executive to ensure its currency, review any issues and to guide any implementation, priorities, improvements and/or changes for the year ahead.

The school is committed to a proactive and vigilant approach to protecting all students to the best of our ability. Child protection is a very high priority and embedded in our daily operations. Our policies and procedures are available to our community and feedback for improvement is welcomed and regularly sought.

2. Identify and analyse risk of harm

Torrens Valley Christian School has developed and implements a risk management strategy that identifies, assesses, and takes steps to minimize the risks of harm to children and young people.

a. Risk Management

- Identifying risks.
- Assessing risks.
- Minimising the risk of harm.
- It is recognised that risks to children and young people extend beyond physical risks. Identified risks may include harm or risk of harm to children and young people caused by a school culture that is not child-safe focussed.
- A code of conduct that is not role related, targeted to the school, or that is not circulated to or understood by staff and volunteers.
- An environment where children and young people do not feel included.
- A school climate where children and young people and their families are not supported to report concerns, complaints, and feedback.
- Inappropriate touching by staff or volunteers to correct technique, such as in music, dance, gymnastics, or sport tuition.
- Access to an unsafe online environment.
- Harm caused by staff or volunteers in their interactions with children or young people.
- Third party contractors delivering services for the organisation.
- Lack of support for children and young people when harm occurs.
- Recruitment of a 'prohibited person' within the organisation or contracting with a third party that does not have a Working with Children Check (WWCC) or a Child Safe compliance statement.
- Allowing a person to work with children or young people while the WWCC is being processed.
- A lack of organisational understanding regarding obligations to report harm and risk of harm to the Child Abuse Report Line and SA Police.
- The inappropriate use of power to hurt, scare or control.
- During transportation.
- Lack of appropriate supervision.
- The organisation holds overnight and/or off-site activities with children or young people where an appropriately approved Child Safe compliance statement is not lodged with the Department of Human Services.
- Taking images of children and young people.

- Online communications between staff or volunteers and children and young people.
- Failure to protect privacy and confidentiality.
- Failure to implement protection measures when dealing with a staff member or volunteer who is being investigated for, or is charged with, a serious criminal offence.

b. Annual Review of Child Protection Policy and Procedures

- The Executive Team conducts an annual review prior to the start of Term 1.
- A full review with community consultation is undertaken every three years. All changes are to be approved by the School Board.

c. Documentation and Record-keeping

- Accurate, up to date and confidential records are kept of the following:
 - Staff and volunteer training.
 - Working with Children Checks.
 - Reports of any harm or risk of harm and associated documentation.

3. Choose suitable employees and volunteers

The school is committed to ensuring that all reasonable actions are taken so that only suitable and appropriate people are selected to work or volunteer with our students. This involves a combination of Working with Children Checks, Referee and Background checks, face to face interviews and vigilance in observing their behaviour, attitudes and relationships with students.

a. Working with Children Checks

- All persons (staff and volunteers) who are in regular contact with children and young people or who work near children and young people on a regular basis, or who supervise such persons, or who have access to children and young people's records are required to present to the school a current 'not prohibited' Working with Children Check before commencing their duties and to keep currency, carried out at least every three years.
- All teachers are required to have current registration with the Teachers' Registration Board of SA. A Working with Children Check is a compulsory component of the Teacher Registration, and it is the teacher's responsibility to maintain the currency of their teacher registration (every 3 years) and provide the HR Manager with a copy of their certificate prior to the expiration date.

b. Background and Referee Checks

- As a key part of the recruitment, as well as Working with Children Checks, referees are contacted and other necessary background checks undertaken to ensure the suitability of all persons who are in regular contact with children and young people or who work near children and young people on a regular basis, or who supervise such persons, or who have access to children and young people's records.

c. Face to face interviews

- Whenever possible a face-to-face interview with the Principal or member of the Executive Team will be conducted prior to the appointment of any staff member. All appointments will be approved by the Board.

4. Expectations, Supervision, Codes of Conduct and Professional Boundaries for Staff and Volunteers

The School values all staff and volunteers. They are treated fairly and respectfully and are required to contribute to our students' safety and wellbeing in the following ways:

- a. Provision of a safe, respectful and engaging environment where our students observe and are taught positive life skills and values. This helps our students to:
- Develop and expect positive relationships with others.
 - Feel connected to the school community and beyond.
 - Be resilient and resourceful in dealing with stress and adversity.
 - Achieve their potential as learners and members of our community.

- b. Be aware, vigilant, and able to recognise when children and young people’s wellbeing or safety is being compromised. They should be prepared to act and follow up on their concerns.

This helps ensure:

- Timely and relevant information is gathered and shared with other relevant persons.
- Unsuitable individuals are not present at or involved with the school.
- Students and their families are directed to support when they first show signs of needing it.
- Harm or risk of harm children and young people is prevented or minimised.
- Understand that the needs of children and young people who have been harmed or at risk of harm may require them to adapt their programs and support accordingly. They are to aim to help these children and young people stay connected to school and contribute to their recovery and their development of positive coping skills and learning success.

- c. Supervision of students

Students are actively supervised by staff at the appropriate ratio for the age of the students, purpose, type and location of the activity. Supervision requirements for practical lessons, counselling, yard duty, camps, excursions, travel, etc. are documented in the relevant policies and procedures of which all staff are made aware and required to follow.

- d. Working one to one with students

At times it may be necessary for staff to work one to one alone with a student. Guidelines for these situations are outlined in the *Protective Practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people*. Four essential rules are:

- Make it public (open and visible space).
- Make it authorised (ensure you have your school leader’s approval).
- Make it purposeful (observe professional standards in relation to designated roles).
- Make it timely (consider the appropriateness of the time of day and length of time).

- e. Code of Conduct, Professional Boundaries and Expectations of Staff and Volunteers

Torrens Valley Christian School has developed a Child Safe Code of Conduct to specify standards of conduct and care, professional boundaries, ethical behaviour and unacceptable behaviour when working and interacting with children. This is based on information outlined in the Protective practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people guidelines. The aim is to provide guidance to staff on how best to support students, and how to avoid or manage difficult situations. The Child Safe Code of Conduct applies to all staff and breaches of the Code may result in disciplinary action or, in the case of serious breaches, dismissal.

5. Support, train, supervise and enhance the performance

All volunteers and employees who work with children and young people or their records have ongoing supervision, support, and training such that their performance is developed and enhanced to promote the establishment and maintenance of a child safe environment.

- a. Responding to Risks of Harm, Abuse and Neglect – Education and Care (RRHAN-EC Certificate) Training

- All school staff must complete the full-day RRHAN-EC training and then the regular (every three years) update training (online). A current certificate must be provided to the Business Office prior to the commencement of duties or the expiration date.
- All teachers are required to undertake the full-day RRHAN-EC training to obtain their registration with the Teachers’ Registration Board of SA and undertake the update training to renew registration. A Working with Children Check is a compulsory component of the Teacher Registration process. It is the teacher’s responsibility to maintain the currency of their teacher registration and provide the Business Manager with a copy of their certificate prior to the expiration date.
- Volunteers can undertake an in-school face to face session (PowerPoint presentation and course handbook) facilitated by the Deputy Principal or their delegate at the beginning of each year and be provided with their certificate by the school. Alternatively, volunteers can choose to complete the online Education and Care Induction for Volunteers Module (20 minutes) and print their certificate upon completion. Volunteers must undertake the

training before commencing their role.

- Regular training and updates are provided to employees and volunteers regarding school policies, practices, Codes of Conduct, Protective Practices for staff and volunteers, legal obligations and mandatory notification.

b. Staff Induction

All new staff undergo an induction process. The School's Child Protection principles, policies and procedures, as well as their role and responsibilities, form an integral component of the induction. It is essential that new staff not only develop a thorough understanding of the legislative, administrative, social, and educational requirements to protect children and young people but that they also engage with our proactive and positive child-safe ethos, culture and practices.

6. Report and respond appropriately to suspected harm or risk of harm

a. Reporting Procedure

- All staff and volunteers are regularly reminded of their obligation to and how to make timely and accurate reports of suspected harm or risk of harm. It is an expectation of the school that any person who, in the course of their work or volunteering, suspects on reasonable grounds that a child is being or has been harmed or at risk of harm must report their suspicion to the Child Abuse Report Line: CARL 131478. This includes even persons who are not mandated to report suspected child harm or risk of harm under the legislation. If a child is at immediate risk, report to SA Police on 000.
- After reporting to CARL, all teachers, staff and volunteers need to also inform the Principal of any mandatory notifications, to ensure that the Principal can take any appropriate action to support the child. If the notification concerns the Principal, then the Chair of the School Board would be informed not the Principal.
- The School Mandatory Notification Procedure details the requirements and process to make a report and these must be followed precisely.

b. Responding to Reports of Suspected Harm or Risk of Harm

- The school will act promptly and responsibly in dealing with any reports and allegations of harm or risk of harm.
- All reports will be managed by the Principal and reported to the Chair of the School Board.
- The care, safety and welfare of the student is the paramount consideration.
- Where appropriate other external authorities will be notified e.g. SAPOL, Teachers' Registration Board, AISSA.
- The Guidelines provided in the SA cross-sector document *Managing allegations of sexual misconduct in SA education and care settings* (2013) when required will be followed.
- If the report involves a staff or community member, the Principal will also follow the guidelines in the Critical Incident Procedure.

c. Responding to problem sexual behaviour involving children and young people

- The school will work in line with the Guidelines provided in the SA cross-sector document: *Responding to problem sexual behaviour involving children and young people: guideline for staff in education and care settings* (2019) in all circumstances where a child or young person is alleged to have engaged in problem sexual behaviour.
- These Guidelines outline the responsibilities staff members have in these circumstances and recognise that procedures are significantly different from those involving allegations of sexual misconduct by adults. They reflect the different rights and needs of children and young people and the different legislation within which staff must operate.

d. Record Keeping and Documentation

- Documentation of any incident and follow up actions, e.g., reports, records of interviews and meetings must be stored in a locked, confidential file.

7. Empower and promote the participation of children and young people in developing and maintaining child safe environments

a. Curriculum

The school-wide implementation of the *Keeping-Safe Child Protection Curriculum (KS: CPC)* enables a cohesive, consistent, and clear approach to developing 4 key aspects:

- The right to be safe.
- Relationships.
- Recognising and reporting harm or risk of harm.
- Protective strategies.

The Keeping-Safe Child Protection Curriculum is embedded in our teaching, learning and pastoral care across all year levels. It is a school expectation that all teaching staff undertake the full day KS: CPC training and then maintain currency through completing the online course every three years.

b. Pastoral Program

Our Pastoral Program is fully integrated throughout the teaching and learning and structural organisation to effectively meet the personal, social, wellbeing and academic needs of students. A greater understanding of themselves and others is nurtured; they develop resilience and gain confidence to manage and cope with the opportunities and challenges of real life. A focus on positive psychology and wellbeing empowers students to keep themselves and others safe.

c. Student Voice

We believe our students have unique perspectives on learning, teaching, and schooling, and we encourage them to actively shape their own education. Student voice allows students to engage, participate, lead and learn. We foster in our students a sense of social justice and develop their self-confidence and the skills to stand up for what they believe is just and fair.

Relevant Legislation

Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA)

Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 (SA)

Statutes Amendment (Child Sexual Abuse) Act 2021 (SA)

Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)

Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (SA) Education Act 2013 (Cth)

Teacher Registration and Standards Act 2004 (SA) and Amendment Bill 2020

Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011(SA)

Relevant Conventions

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

The United Nations Conventions of the Rights of the Child

Relevant Standards and Frameworks

Australian Student Wellbeing Framework

National Quality Framework

Safe & Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021 - 2031

Child Safe Organisations National Principles

Disability Standards for Education 2005

Homestay Standards

Relevant Cross Sector Guidelines

Protective Practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people

Managing allegations of sexual misconduct in SA education and care settings

Responding to problem sexual behaviour in children and young people

Suicide Postvention Guidelines

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