



Child Safety Policy

POLICY CATEGORY: CHILD SAFETY

POLICY CONTROL INFORMATION

POLICY RISK RATING	VERSION	OWNER	PUBLICATION
Very High	2.2	Deputy Principal	Internal (eVI, School Community (eVI) and Public (website)
MGGS APPROVER	MGGS APPROVAL DATE	COUNCIL APPROVAL DATE	NEXT REVIEW DATE
Principal	Version 2.1 14 June 2022 Version 2.2 20 July 2023	Version 2.1 21 June 2022 Version 2.2 13 September 2023	July 2024

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1. POLICY OBJECTIVE

Melbourne Girls Grammar (MGGS) is committed to the safety of every child enrolled as a student at our school. Children have the right to a safe environment at school. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. This policy provides a framework and overview of the key elements of our approach to child safety at MGGS:

- The implementation of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child protection within the School.
- The creation of a positive and robust child protection culture.
- The promotion and open discussion of child protection issues within the School.
- Complying with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection in Victoria.

Our School policies and procedures have been developed to create a culturally safe and inclusive environment and meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families.

1.1. Scope

This policy applies to the following:

- all Melbourne Girls Grammar School staff
- all students
- all parents/guardians
- all visitors
- all volunteers and contractors (whether or not they work in direct contact with students)
- Council advisory members

This policy provides procedures and applies to all school activities managed or conducted by MGGS during and outside of school hours. This includes school activities that are occurring on school campus, boarding residences, offsite, online, co-curricular, sport activities and programs, excursions, camps, interstate and overseas travel. In the application and implementation of this policy full consideration is required regarding the needs of our students including culture, diversity and age.

The MGGS school environment is any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by MGGS for use by a child during or outside school hours and includes:

- our Morris Hall Campus in Caroline Street, South Yarra;
- our Merton Hall Campus and ELC and Boarding House facilities in Anderson Street, South Yarra;
- our Glenhope Campus on Punt Road, South Yarra;
- online school environments including email and intranet systems; and
- other locations provided by MGGS for a child's use, including locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events.

This policy informs our school community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our procedures for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

2. POLICY SECTION

2.1. Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

- We are committed to the safety, participation, empowerment and protection of all children/students in our care. We are 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.
- We have zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to the protection of children from all forms of child abuse. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously and consistently

with our robust policies and procedures. Our policies and procedures will provide the contact details of staff who have specific child safety responsibilities and who may receive reports of suspicion of child abuse. Child abuse includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect and a child's exposure to family violence.

- We are committed to proactively preventing child abuse, identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- We have robust and documented human resources and recruitment procedures for all staff and volunteers.
- We are committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- We support and respect all children, as well as staff and volunteers. We are committed to the emotional, physical and cultural safety of all children and to providing a safe learning environment.
- We support and respect all students and welcome and promote diversity and tolerance in the School. We do this by acknowledging and celebrating people from all cultural backgrounds and support their ability to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights. In particular, the School promotes the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.
 - International students.
 - Children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families.
 - Children who express a full range of sexual orientation and gender identity and their families.
 - Neurodiverse children, children with disabilities, and vulnerable children and their families.
- 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.
- We are committed to taking action to ensure a child safe culture is championed and modelled across the school and promoting the important role that everyone involved in our school has in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.
- We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments and we are committed to regular reviews of our child safe practices and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

2.2. Application

The policy is to be applied in conjunction with provisions in the *Child Safety Code of Conduct* and all other MGGS child safety policies and procedures.

2.3. Reporting child safety incidents and concerns

All staff, students, parents/carers, contractors, volunteers, School Council and committee members, Local Support Persons, external education providers or other community members who have concerns or reasonable beliefs that a child may be subject to abuse must immediately report any child safety incident, concern, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse or neglect to the Principal or another member of the MGGS Child Safety Team. We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place.

You must also ensure that the child(ren) is/are safe. Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger you must call 000 without delay.

The Principal's contact details are:

Dr Toni Meath, Principal

Melbourne Girls Grammar, 86 Anderson Street, South Yarra
Telephone: 9862 9200
Email: principal@mggs.vic.edu.au

In addition to the Principal, the members of the MGGS Child Safety Team are the persons holding the following positions:

- Deputy Principal
- Executive Director Junior Years and Early Learning
- Executive Director Middle Years
- Executive Director Senior Years

The MGGS Child Safety Team can be contacted via childsafetyteam@mggs.vic.edu.au

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant School staff have been informed, we will ensure MGGS 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

MGGS takes all allegations seriously and has documented practices to investigate thoroughly and with urgency. If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions taken. Our staff are trained to deal appropriately with allegations and our volunteers are informed on how to report an allegation. We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse, inappropriate behaviour or are a victim.

For further details on MGGS's reporting requirements of child abuse incidents please refer to the MGGS *Child Safety Response and Mandatory Reporting Procedure*. For the School's procedures for responding to and reporting historical or past claims, refer to the *Child Sexual Abuse Response Policy*.

Our *Student Safety and Wellbeing Policy* and *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy* cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

2.4. Child Safe Principles

MGGS's child safety commitments are based on the following overarching principles guiding the development and regular review of our systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children:

- All children have the right to be safe and the welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
- The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected.
- The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child-safe culture and Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
- Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in the *Child Safety Code of Conduct*.
- Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our School community.
- Procedures are in place to screen all staff, external education providers, contractors and volunteers who have direct contact with children.
- Child safety training is mandatory for all School Council members, staff and nominated volunteers as per our *Volunteer Management Procedure*.
- Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are accessible for all members of the School community, via the *Child Safety Response and Mandatory Reporting Procedure* on MGGS's [Policy page](#) of eVI or MGGS's external website.
- 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.
- Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

2.5. Child Safety Program

MGGS is committed to effectively implementing our Child Safety Program and ensuring it is appropriately reviewed and updated. We adopt a risk management approach by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety risks on a range of factors including the nature of our activities, physical and online environments and the characteristics of the student body. Our Child Safety Program covers all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children. 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 and the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children.
- A child safety training program and strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, students, parents and carers, external education providers, contractors and volunteers to understand, identify, discuss and report child protection matters.
- Procedures for recruiting and screening School Council members, staff (including casual, emergency relief, part-time and full-time) and contractors and volunteers.
- Wellbeing strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe.
- Policies with respect to cultural diversity and students with disabilities.
- Guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality.
- A system for oversight, monitoring, continuous improvement and review.
- Policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards including the National Child Safe Standards, Ministerial Order 706 and Ministerial Order 1359.

2.6. Responsibility

Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility. The school leadership team (comprising the Principal and School Council) is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained and policies and documented practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359. These strategies will give the highest priority to the promotion and protection of a child's safety, health, development, education and wellbeing.

The Principal will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed, including overseeing the programs for child safety and the associated culture, compliance, incident and reporting programs
- champion child safety within the School and facilitate 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 School community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and School Council meetings
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and nominated volunteers to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of 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
- assist in co-ordinating responses to child safety incidents, including overseeing compliance with all mandatory reporting.

2.7. Our Children and their Families

- Our strategies will empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation and provide them with opportunities to give us feedback and ensure that they feel safe and comfortable in reporting concerns or allegations of abuse.

- To support child safety and wellbeing 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.
- Our students are informed of their rights to participate in a safe and supportive educational environment, through the MGGS Curriculum Plan. We arrange age-appropriate training and education programs to inform students about sexual abuse prevention and related information and provide them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students. We ensure our students speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers and know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe. We encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time, including the School Counsellors. Students and families can also access information on how to report concerns via eVI, the student diary, parent handbook and our external website.
- The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, to help children and young people feel safe and be less isolated. Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support at MGGS to ensure a sense of belonging through our Healthy Relationships Program, Student Wellbeing Program, Student Code of Conduct and our MGGS values.
- 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. To support engagement, MGGS are committed to raising awareness and 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.
- We provide students with opportunities to participate and are responsive to their contributions in a way that strengthens confidence and engagement. We have formal and informal avenues for feedback, confidential disclosure and reporting. We are committed to ensuring students' families participate in decisions affecting their child, where appropriate. This may include participation in reporting and responding to allegations of abuse.
- 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. We do this by various methods, including communicating regarding our Child Safe policies and seeking feedback from families and the community via eVI, Messenger articles, online feedback forms, School Council, Sub-committees of School Council and Parent Association meetings. Newsletters/Messenger articles) will 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. All of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents via eVI and our [external website](#).
- When MGGS is gathering information regarding 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.

2.8. Our Staff and Volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave when working and interacting with children in our organisation. All staff and volunteers will:

- Participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the School or the Department of Education, and always follow the School's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures.
- Act in accordance with our [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#) as well as their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse.
- Identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our [Child Safety Response and Mandatory Reporting Procedure](#), including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#).
- 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.
- Be trained and supported to effectively implement our *Child Safety Policy*.

- Receive training and information to respond effectively to child safety and wellbeing issues, recognise key indicators of child harm including harm caused by other student and receive training and information on how to build culturally safe environments for students.
- Facilitate child-friendly ways for children and young people to express their views, participate in decision making and raise their concerns.
- Identify and mitigate risks in the online and physical environments without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.

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. All staff and volunteers must raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with the Principal or Deputy Principal. Where the concern relates to the Principal or Deputy Principal, they should report to the Chair of the School Council.

We do not distinguish between direct and indirect volunteers as all volunteers on School premises may have contact with students, giving rise to a duty of care to protect our students. Volunteers should not be left alone with students, but our policy and procedures will be designed assuming this may inadvertently occur. MGGS will ensure that volunteers are aware of the *Child Safety Policy* and *Child Safety Code of Conduct*. Please refer to the *Volunteer Management Procedure* for the *Child Safety Volunteer Agreement*.

School Council

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

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community
- ensure that child safety is a standing agenda item at School Council meetings
- undertake annual training on child safety
- approve updates to, and act in accordance with the *Child Safety Code of Conduct* to the extent that it applies to School Council members
- when hiring School Council members, ensure that selection, supervision and management practices are child safe

Specific staff child safety responsibilities

MGGS has a Child Safety Team to implement our child safety policies and practices, be the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and co-ordinate responses to child safety incidents.

- The Deputy Principal is responsible for monitoring MGGS's compliance with the *Child Safety Policy*. Anyone in our school community should approach the Deputy Principal if they have any concerns about MGGS's compliance with the *Child Safety Policy*.
- The Executive Director, Marketing and Community Engagement is responsible for informing the School community about this policy, and making it publicly available.
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in other child safety policies and procedures, including the *Child Safety Code of Conduct*, *Child Safety Response and Mandatory Reporting Procedure* and the *Child Safety Strategy*.

Child Safety matters are discussed and managed as required at weekly Executive Team meetings, quarterly OH&S Committee meetings and quarterly Student Safety Committee meetings. The Student Safety Committee provides an opportunity for students to provide input into MGGS Child Safety.

The MGGS Child Safety Risk register is updated annually by the Child Safety Team and reported annually to the OH&S Committee, Executive Team, Audit and Risk Management Committee, Property Committee and School Council.

2.9. Contractors

All contractors engaged by MGGS are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment. Contractors include outsourced maintenance and building services, consultants, catering providers and School cleaners. This also includes extra-curricular teachers and instructors who are engaged by students and their families directly, rather than MGGS, but have an agreement with MGGS

to use MGGS's facilities. All contractors engaged by MGGS are required to be familiar with MGGS's Child Safety Commitment. MGGS will also include this requirement in its written agreement with third-party contractors.

2.10. External Education Providers

An external education provider is any organisation that MGGS has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at MGGS. The delivery of such a course may take place on MGGS premises or elsewhere. All external education providers engaged by MGGS are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment. All external education providers engaged by MGGS are required to be familiar with our Child Safety Commitment. MGGS will include this requirement in its written agreement with external education providers.

2.11. Training and education

Training and education are important to ensure that everyone at MGGS understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility. Our organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. New employees, volunteers and contractors are provided with information to ensure they understand MGGS'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 (please refer to the *Child Safety Code of Conduct* to understand appropriate behaviour further).

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. 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 training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- our School's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures 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.

The training and awareness requirements for MGGS volunteers depend on the type and scope of volunteering and this is detailed in the *Volunteer Management Procedure*. Training and awareness will be tailored where possible according to specific roles and responsibilities. All volunteers engaged by MGGS will be required to complete on an annual basis MGGS's volunteer compliance requirements, including MGGS's Child Safety Training and successful completion of the associated assessment .

All School Council and sub-committee members are considered to be in governance roles with an ability to influence MGGS's decision-making and therefore are required to be treated as responsible persons and undertake regular child safe training and awareness.– To ensure our School Council and sub-committee members are 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 school environment child safety training will be required to be undertaken as part of their induction, in addition to MGGS annually circulating its Child Safety policies and procedures to these members. Additionally, all Council and Audit and Risk Management Committee members will be 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 school environment
- MGGS child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices

2.12. Recruitment

At MGGS we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training and supervision procedures to ensure all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations. All public advertisements and selection criteria for MGGS job applications will emphasise our commitment to child safety.

All people aged 18 and over engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, must hold a Working with Children Check and provide evidence of this Check. Please refer to the *Working with Children Check Policy* on eVI for further information. When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching registration
- collect and record:
 - 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.
- carry out thorough reference checks and pre-employment screening to ensure that we are recruiting with child safety in mind.

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 *Child Safety Response and Mandatory Reporting Procedure* and
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our school and department policies and our legal obligations. Staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. This will be undertaken by line managers with their staff on an ongoing basis, after promotion to a new role and at the 3 and 6 month mark after commencement at MGGS. MGGS promotes a culture of open discussion regarding child safety and suitable behaviours and the Executive Team are regularly prompted to raise any staffing concerns they may have.

All volunteers are required to comply with our *Volunteer Management Procedure*, 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.

2.13. Supporting Our School Community

Key principles that we must apply in the design of policy, procedure, interventions, support and reporting in our child protection program are to ensure we:

- promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- promote the cultural safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promote the safety of children with any form of disability.

We are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island culture, values and practices are respected. We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and the community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

We have developed the following strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community:

- MGGS *Diversity and Inclusivity Policy*.
- MGGS Reconciliation Action Plan.
- Acknowledgement of Country at staff meetings and assemblies.
- Cultural inclusion in the MGGS events calendar.
- Cultural Competency training.
- Cultural leave able to be approved at the discretion of the Principal or delegate.
- Indigenous representation on the MGGS Institute Advisory Board.
- First Nations Curriculum at Year 5.
- Implementation of student leadership initiatives.

MGGS is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the School community through:

- ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on our website including the *Child Safety Policy* (this document), *Child Safety Code of Conduct* and the *Child Safety Response and Mandatory Reporting Procedure*
- updates in our School newsletter
- ensuring that child safety is a standing agenda item at School leadership meetings and School Council meetings.

2.14. Support for Affected Students

Ensuring a student feels safe and supported following an incident is of critical importance to MGGS. MGGS will also ensure that appropriate assistance and support is provided to any child who discloses child abuse or is linked in any way to suspected child abuse. MGGS will work closely with the students, parents and carers and our wellbeing team to provide all additional support services that are available. Each matter will be handled on a case-by-case basis. An individual may be supported with:

- Referral to the School counselling team.
- Referral to external specialist agencies.
- Family counselling.
- Academic support.

2.15. Fair Procedures

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence. We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates.

2.16. Privacy and Confidentiality

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. All records are securely stored by the School Counselling team, with a secure copy held in the Principal's Office. We have safeguards and procedures in place to ensure any personal information is protected in accordance with our *Privacy Policy* and applicable legislation. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it. A copy of the *Privacy Policy* is available on the School website and on eVI.

Where there is suspected abuse or misconduct, employees, volunteers and contractors must not disclose or make use of the information in a manner that breaches confidentiality, other than to report and act consistent with the *Child Safety Policy* and relevant statutory requirements.

2.17. Legislative Responsibilities

At MGGS we take our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police. If you fail to report the information, you may be charged with a criminal offence. The maximum penalty is three years imprisonment.
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so. If you fail to protect a child you may be charged with a criminal offence. The maximum penalty is five years imprisonment.

Please refer to the *Child Safety Response and Mandatory Reporting Procedure* for further information on these responsibilities.

2.18. Child Safety complaints

MGGS 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.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our [Complaints and Resolution Procedures for Parents](#) and [Students and Staff Complaints Resolution Policy](#).

2.19. Risk Management

In Victoria, organisations must protect children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children. We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media). The MGGS Executive Team meets on a regular basis and has a standing agenda item for Child Safety.

3. POLICY COMPLIANCE

3.1. Policy Breach

A breach of this policy or procedure may lead to disciplinary action. All breaches, near misses and risks related to this policy should be reported to a member of the MGGS Child Safety Team

3.2. Policy Compliance monitoring

Compliance with this policy will be monitored by the Child Safety Team, Human Resource Manager and Risk and Compliance Manager and this may include independent audits and reviews.

4. DEFINITIONS

Child	An individual who is under the age of 18 years and who is enrolled as a student at MGGS.
Child abuse	Child abuse includes- (a) any act committed against a child involving- (i) a sexual offence; or (ii) the offence of grooming; and (b) the infliction, on a child, of- (i) physical violence; or (ii) serious emotional or psychological harm; and (c) serious neglect of a child.
Child-connected work	This is work that is authorised by MGGS that is performed by an adult in the MGGS school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child safety	Child safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.
Child Safety Team	The MGGS Child Safety Team comprises: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal • Deputy Principal • Executive Director of Early Learning and Junior Years • Executive Director of Middle Years • Executive Director of Senior Years
Failure to protect a child from a sexual offence	The offence provides that a person who: <p>a. by reason of the position they occupy within a relevant organisation, has the power or responsibility to reduce or remove a substantial risk that a relevant child will become the victim of a sexual offence committed by a person of or over the age of 18 years who is associated with the relevant organisation; and</p> <p>b. knows that there is a substantial risk that the person will commit a sexual offence against a relevant child – must not negligently fail to reduce or remove that risk.</p>
Failure to disclose an offence	A person of or over the age of 18 years (whether in Victoria or elsewhere) who has information that leads the person to form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child under the age of 16 years by another person of or over the age of 18 years must disclose that information to a police officer as soon as it is practicable to do so, unless the person has a reasonable excuse for not doing so.
Grooming	The offence of grooming for sexual conduct with a child under the age of 16 is found in section 49M of the <i>Crimes Act 1958</i> . That section provides: (1) A person (A) commits an offence if— (a) A is 18 years of age or more; and <p>(b) A communicates, by words or conduct (whether or not a response is made to the communication), with— (i) another person (B) who is a child under the age of 16 years; or (ii) another person (C) under whose care, supervision or authority B is; and</p> <p>(c) A intends that the communication facilitate B engaging or being involved in the commission of a sexual offence by A or by another person who is 18 years of age or more.</p> <p>(2) A person who commits an offence against subsection (1) is liable to level 5 imprisonment (10 years maximum).</p> <p>(3) A does not intend to facilitate B engaging or being involved in the commission of a sexual offence by A or by another person who is 18 years of age or more if, were the conduct constituting the sexual offence to occur, A or the other person would satisfy an exception, or have a defence, to that sexual offence.</p> <p>(4) It is immaterial that some or all of the conduct constituting an offence against subsection (1) occurred outside Victoria, so long as B or C was, or B and C were, in Victoria at the time at which that conduct occurred.</p> <p>(5) It is immaterial that B or C was, or B and C were, outside Victoria at the time at which some or all of the conduct constituting an offence against subsection (1) occurred, so long as A was in Victoria at the time that conduct occurred.</p> <p>(6) It is immaterial that A, B and C were all outside Victoria at the time at which some or all of the conduct constituting an offence against subsection (1) occurred, so long as A intended that the sexual offence would occur in Victoria.</p> <p>(7) In this section— communication includes an electronic communication within the meaning of the <i>Electronic Transactions (Victoria) Act 2000</i>;</p>

	<p>sexual offence means—</p> <p>(a) an offence against a provision of Subdivision (8A), this Subdivision (other than section 49K(1) or this section), (8C), (8D), (8E), (8F) or (8FA); or</p> <p>(b) an attempt to commit an offence covered by paragraph (a); or</p> <p>(c) an assault with intent to commit an offence referred to in paragraph (a).</p> <p>Further information can be obtained at: www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/grooming-offence</p>
School environment	<p>The MGGS school environment is any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by MGGS for use by a child during or outside school hours, and includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • our Morris Hall Campus in Caroline Street, South Yarra • our Merton Hall Campus and ELC and Boarding House facilities in Anderson Street, South Yarra • our Glenhope Campus on Punt Road, South Yarra • online school environments including email and intranet systems • other locations provided by MGGS for a child's use, including locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events.
Student	A person who is enrolled at or attends the school or a student at the school boarding premises.
Volunteer	A person who performs work without remuneration or reward for the school or school boarding premises in the school environment

5. RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND LEGISLATION

5.1. MGGS policy and procedure alignment

- *Anaphylaxis Management Policy*
- *Child Safety Code of Conduct*
- *Child Sexual Abuse Response Policy*
- *Child Safety Response and Mandatory Reporting Procedure*
- *Child Safety Strategy*
- *Communication Technologies Policy*
- *Counselling Guidelines*
- *Merton Hall Excursions and Camps Policy*
- *Morris Hall Excursions and Camps Policy*
- *Working with Children Check Policy*
- *Privacy Policy*
- *Trips and Tours Policy*
- Victorian Institute of Teaching Code of Conduct
- *MGGS Recruitment Policy*
- HR Employment Section on MGGS website
- *COVID-19 Vaccination (Workers) Policy and COVID-Safe Plan*
- *Student Duty of Care Policy*
- *Student Safety and Wellbeing Policy*

5.2. Related legislation

The following legislation, standards and regulations apply and this policy aligns with these mandated requirements:

- *Ministerial Order 706*

- *Ministerial Order 1359*
- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)*

Further information on this policy can be obtained from the Deputy Principal.

6. POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

At MGGS, we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures and practices. This policy is rated very high risk.

We will:

- review our policy on an annual basis or following any significant child safety incident that occurs and improve our policy and procedures as required
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice and keep up-to-date with changes to laws and government policies
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community.

This Policy is to be reviewed by the Deputy Principal and Risk and Compliance Manager.

Any significant proposed changes to this Policy must be approved by the Principal and School Council.