



Child Safe Policy

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Purpose

This policy was written to demonstrate the strong commitment of Shepparton ACE Secondary College (SASC) to child safety and establishing and maintaining child safe and child friendly environments.

Context

This policy reflects our commitment to provide a safe environment where every person has the right to be treated with respect and is safe and protected from harm.

The student cohort at SASC is recognised as coming from at risk backgrounds including family violence, abuse, neglect, drug and alcohol abuse, poor mental health, intergenerational violence, racism and poverty. All staff at SASC are responsible for maintaining the safety of the student cohort by being aware of and complying with the schools policies including the Child Safe Policy, reviewing child safety in regular staff meetings, maintaining WWCCs, Police Checks, VIT registration (along with photo ID such as copies of licenses and/or passports) and participating in Child Safety training at SASC.

The current location of SASC is also recognised as one that presents some risk to student safety due to heavy foot traffic due to the central business district location of SASC. The outer boundaries of SACE are included in the yard duty rosters and staff are required to report any risk/s to staff and young people to the child safety officer and school principal. The school has invested in high quality CCTV cameras that cover the perimeter of the school, the interior of the school, school entry way, office and the school yard. CCTV coverage has been designed to ensure that there are no hidden areas where supervision is inadequate. Shepparton City Council has initiated a 40kph speed limit in the CBD, negating the need to approach council for a school specific speed limit zone.

The SASC Child Safety Policy complies with the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools, Ministerial Order No 870.

Scope

This policy, from the date of endorsement, applies to any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school for use of a child during and after school hours by all people involved in the organisation, including:

- students
- teachers (permanent and casual)
- school council members
- contractors
- sub-contractors
- work experience students
- students on social work placements
- indirect service providers
- any other individual involved in this organisation

This policy covers all forms of abuse including:

- Any act committed against a student involving a sexual offence or grooming
- Any infliction of physical violence and serious emotional and psychological harm on a student
- Serious neglect of a student

Commitment to Young People's Safety

All young people who come to SASC have a right to feel and be safe. We are committed to the safety and well-being of all young people accessing our services and the welfare of those in our care will always be our first priority. We aim to create a safe and friendly environment where all young people are valued and feel safe. All staff at SASC are responsible for child safety, to support staff SASC has created the fulltime position of Child Safety Officer this position is held by a qualified social worker.

Young People's Participation

Shepparton ACE Secondary College encourages and respects the views of the young people who access our services. We listen to and act upon any concerns that young people or their families raise with us. We teach young people what they can do if they feel unsafe.

We ensure that young people and their families know their rights and how to access the complaints procedures available to them.

We value diversity and do not tolerate any discriminatory practices of any kind.

- We respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount.
- We highly value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.
- We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD), and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.
- We participate in NAIDOC Week and Sorry Day and keep close connections to the local Aboriginal elders and the Yorta Yorta and Bangarang groups.
- Welcome to country occurs each year at the start of the school year with local elders undertaking a smoking ceremony at the school to keep the schools connections to elders the traditional occupiers of the land.
- Cultural advice and support is sought when required for CALD children through the local community and the Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District.
- We hold Refugee Week events at the school to raise awareness of refugee issues and to ensure the school is open and inclusive to all.
- Children with disabilities are supported and cared for as all children, with their unique communication and behavioural needs supported by teaching staff with external specialist support sought as needed.
- We participate in local pride events and support International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism and Transphobia (*IDAHOBIT*) – Australia.
- We participate in Child Protection Week and hold relevant Child Protection events at the school.

Recruitment Practices

SASC takes all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with our students. We employ a range of screening measures and apply best practice standards in the screening and recruitment of employees and volunteers.

We undertake values-based interviews and conduct referee and qualifications checks on all employees and make reasonable efforts to ensure that employees, volunteers and contractors involved child related work have valid Working with Children Checks.

We conduct criminal history assessment for people working with children, as set out in Section 8B of the *Children's Protection Act 1993*. Criminal history assessments are required for anyone within our organisation that:

- has regular contact with young people and is not directly supervised at all times;
- works in close proximity to young people on a regular basis and is not directly supervised at all times, or supervises or manages persons who:
 - have regular contact with young people or
 - work in close proximity to young people on a regular basis; or
- has access to sensitive records relating to young people.

Exemptions from this requirement may apply in some circumstances.

We ensure that criminal history information is dealt with in accordance with the Child Safe Environments: Standards for dealing with information obtained about the criminal history of employees and volunteers who work with children, issued pursuant to Section 8A, *Children's Protection Act 1993*.

We have processes for monitoring and assessing the continuing suitability of school staff to work with children, including regular reviews of the status of Working with Children Checks and staff professional registration requirements, such as Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration.

Code of Conduct

All members must read, sign and must abide by, our Code of Conduct. (see attachment – Appendix I)

Support for Employees

SASC seeks to attract and retain the best employees. We provide support and supervision, so people feel valued, respected and fairly treated. We ensure that employees who work with young people have ongoing supervision, support and training so that their capacity is developed and enhanced to promote the establishment and maintenance of a safe environment for our student.

Strategies we have implemented include:

- All new employees undergo induction and receive a copy of our child safe policy and code of conduct.
- All employees are to read and sign and date the Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct.
- All employees receive regular supervision sessions that include a focus on ongoing learning about child protection and other matters that affect students.
- All employees are informed of and trained in the Child Safe Standards (including any changes in the standards).

Reporting and responding to suspected child abuse and neglect

Information about making appropriate reports of abuse or neglect is available from the Department of Families Fairness and Housing website

<https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse>

SASC will not tolerate incidents of child abuse.

All employees understand their obligation to notify the Child Protection Crisis Line 13 12 78 (24 hours, 7 days a week, toll free within Victoria) as soon as practicable if they have a reasonable suspicion that a child has been, or is being, abused or neglected.

We provide opportunities for employees on a regular basis to attend information sessions about these mandatory reporting obligations. We also ensure that employees have access to relevant information resources such as:

- [Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams \(SOCIT\)](#)

We ensure that support is also available for the employee making the report, particularly where an ongoing service is provided to the young person and their family.

Child Safety –Education and Training for School Staff

SASC provides employees and volunteers with regular and appropriate opportunities to develop their knowledge of, openness for, and ability to address child safety matters. This includes induction, and ongoing training and professional learning to ensure that everyone understands their professional and legal obligations and responsibilities, and the procedures for reporting suspicion of child abuse and neglect. All new support, administration and teaching staff participate in an induction program which includes an overview of the Child Safety Policy and the Child Safety Code of Conduct.

- All school staff including the board will receive regular Child Safety training every 6 months to ensure up to date practices are maintained.
- All staff will be advised via memos of any changes in child safety reporting requirements and expectations.

Reportable Conduct Scheme

The Commission for Children and Young People is responsible for administering this scheme.

Type of Conduct that are reportable

- Sexual misconduct and offences (against, with or in the presence of a child)
- Physical violence (against, with or in the presence of a child)
- Behaviour that is likely to cause emotional or psychological harm
- Neglect

The Principal is required to:

- Notify the Commission within 3 business days of becoming aware of a reportable allegation
- Investigate the allegation subject to police clearance on criminal matters
- Advise the Commission who is undertaking the investigation
- Manage the risks to children
- Within 30 calendar days provide the Commission detailed information about the reportable allegation and any action you have taken
- Notify the Commission of the investigation findings and any disciplinary action taken

Further Information is available at www.cyp.vic.gov.au

Supporting Young People and their Families

Child Protection is everyone's responsibility. SASC recognises that even where a report is made, we may still have a role in supporting the young person. This support may include:

- Referring the child, young person or their family to other appropriate services
- Displaying information about services that can assist children and their families (such as the Kids Helpline and Youth Healthline) in areas accessed by children and their families.

Dealing with reports or concerns relating to the actions of an employee of our organisation

In addition to making a report to the Child Abuse Report Line, employees and volunteers must also report to the principal if reasonable suspicion is formed that a child has been, or is being, abused or neglected by another employee.

In response to any report to the principal concerning a member, or employee of this organisation, disciplinary action will be taken.

Other protective actions may also be introduced to ensure the safety of children and young people within our organisation.

Examples of strategies to minimise risk include the development of further policies and procedures which may address (but are not limited to):

- Transportation
- Taking images of young people
- Complaints procedures around safety
- Physical contact
- Procedure for breaches of policy
- Training\cyber safe guidelines
- Protecting privacy and confidentiality in issues around child safety
- Procedures for dealing with situations where a member is being investigated for, or is charged with a serious criminal offence.

Evaluation of these strategies and the development of additional strategies to minimise and control risks to children and young people occur as part of our ongoing risk management process.

Informing families and communities

SASC will ensure that families and communities are kept informed about child safety standards and expectations by undertaking following:

- SASC will provide child safety updates on the schools Facebook page
- SASC will provide all child safety information to new students, their careers, and families upon enrolment.
- Changes and or updates to school policies regarding child safety will be posted on schools' website for comment and feedback.
- All feedback will go to the school council for review, amendments if necessary and approval.
- Complaints process will be provided to families upon enrolment
- Complaints process will also be available on the school's website for easy access.

Harassment/bullying

SASC opposes all forms of harassment, discrimination and bullying. We take this issue seriously and encourage anyone who believes that they, or another person, has been harassed, discriminated against or bullied to raise this issue with the Principal.

Communication

SASC will ensure that everyone to whom this policy applies is aware of and has had an opportunity to read the policy.

We also ask employees to sign a written statement indicating that they have read and will abide by our child-safe policy. We retain a copy of all signed statements.

Online environments

SASC understand the risks posed to children and staff in the online environments. While these risks have always been presented, they have been exacerbated by the events over the last few years and a lack of government regulation and protection of children. SASC does not hold classes online, nor does the school allow teachers to email students directly, face time or have any other online communication that is not attended by a parent as well.

SASC IT staff monitor online usage and take action to block any inappropriate, unsafe, and abusive sites that may be tagged through this process. SASC communicates to parents via the school Facebook site information and Newsletters about being safe in the online environment and regularly discusses online safety with students. All IT work is undertaken in house and is not outsourced in any way.

To support an e-safe culture SASC will:

- Not allow staff to have phones in class.

- Collect all student phones and smart watches up to Year 12 at the start of the day and return them at the end of the day (all phones are to be turned off).
- Any students who refuse to hand their phone or smartwatch in will not be permitted to enter the main school building until he/she does so.
- All computer rooms will have screens facing inwards so they can be observed from any point in the room.
- No image will be collected and/or posted of any student who has signed the image privacy form.
- Ensure that staff and teachers are not to contact children out of hours via any electronic medium unless there is a work based need to do so and that the staff are not off duty.
- Staff, families, carers, and students are provided training and information in how to recognise online grooming and what to do if they believe this is occurring.
- iPads will only be used from year 10 upwards and only in open areas where screens can be viewed.
- Laptop trollies will be locked, and all laptops put away when not in use.
- Students will be advised on who to talk to if they have any safety concerns or need advice regarding something happening online that may be cause for concern or be making them feel uncomfortable.
- That any disclosure of grooming, sexting or any other illegal activity is reported to the police and/or child protection.

Breach of Policy

Where an employee is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this Policy, the principal may commence a process under the SASC Performance Management Process.

Where the principal is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty, or responsibility within this policy, the SASC Child Safety Officer is required to inform the School Council for investigation.

Where any other member of the school community (including the Child Safety Officer) is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the school principal is to take appropriate action, including making a Child Protection notification and informing the School Council for investigation.

All notes, documents and performance management paperwork will be locked securely in the relevant filing cabinet in the administration office and be in the care of the Child Safety Officer. In the case of soft copies these will be password protected and stored on the school password protected secure server. If the Child Safety Officer is suspected of breaching the policy, then the documents will be under the protection of the school principal until the completion of any investigation.

Last Updated: **March 2024** of this Child Safety Policy at SASC we are committed to the continuous improvement of our child safety systems and practices. This policy will be regularly reviewed to ensure it is working in practice and updated to accommodate changes in legislation or circumstance.

Links to other policies

- Student Welfare Policy
- Child Protection Mandatory Reporting
- Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Risk Management for Students and Staff

Child Protection Guidelines for Employees

Caring for young people brings additional responsibilities for employees of this organisation.

All employees of this organisation are responsible for promoting the safety and well-being of young people by:

- Ensuring the safety and welfare of the young person is paramount at all times.
- Treating all young people with dignity, equality and respect.
- Adhering to this organisation's child safe policy at all times.
- Ensuring that VIT registration requirements are met and maintained.
- Ensuring that Police Checks and WWCC are current and are maintained for all staff at the school.
- Listening and responding appropriately to the views and concerns of young people within the organisation.
- Taking all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and protection of young people within the organisation.
- Ensuring young people understand their rights and explaining to the young person in age-appropriate language what they can expect when participating in a service, activity or program offered by the organisation.
- Responding quickly, fairly and transparently to any serious complaints made by a young person or their parent/guardian.
- Notifying the **Child Protection Crisis Line 13 12 78** (24 hours, 7 days a week, toll free within Victoria) as soon as practicable if they have a reasonable suspicion that a young person has been or is being abused or neglected. This is an after-hours emergency service. During business hours, contact East Division Intake – rural and regional – 1800 075 599

Employees will not:

- Take part in any unnecessary physical contact with a young person.
- Discriminate against any young person because of age, gender, cultural background, religion, vulnerability, or sexuality.
- Develop any 'special' relationships with young people outside of the professional relationship.
- Contact any student on private social media, via email or phone.

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix I

Our Commitment to Child Safety

Shepparton ACE Secondary College (SASC) is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision - making.

SASC has zero tolerance for child abuse.

SASC is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

Every person involved in SASC has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

Bronwyn Rose
Principal

For display to public.