

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY

GRM 1.13.1

Date Approved:	22/06/2022
Date Effective:	1/07/2022
Scheduled Review Date:	30/06/2023
Policy Category:	Governance and Risk Management
Policy Owner:	Principal

1. Context

The SEDA College (Victoria) Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our school's commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe organisation, where children and young people are safe, happy and empowered.

This policy provides an overview of our College's approach to implementing [Ministerial Order 1359](#) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments. It informs our school community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

2. Definitions

A reference or term included in this policy is defined as follows;

"SEDA College" or "the College" refers to SEDA College (Victoria).

"Child"⁽¹⁾ means a child or young person who is under the age of 18 years.

"Child abuse"⁽¹⁾ includes:

- a) any act committed against a child involving:
 - i. a sexual offence
 - ii. grooming offences under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958
- b) the infliction, on a child, of:
 - i. physical violence
 - ii. serious emotional or psychological harm
- c) the serious neglect of a child including exposure to family violence and its effects

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"Child safety"⁽²⁾ includes 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 suspicions, incidents, disclosures or allegations of child abuse.

"Child-connected work"⁽¹⁾ means:

- a) work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present
- b) for the purposes of a school boarding premises, work authorised by the provider of school boarding premises in a school boarding premises environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

"Child-related work"⁽³⁾ means work—

- a) at or for a service, body or place, or that involves an activity, specified in subsection (3); and
- b) that usually involves direct contact with a child.

"School governing authority"⁽¹⁾ means:

- a) the proprietor of a school, including a person authorised to act for or on behalf of the proprietor
- b) the governing body for a school (however described), as authorised by the proprietor of a school or the ETR Act
- c) the principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school, the school governing body, or the ETR Act.

"School environment"⁽¹⁾ means any of the following physical, online or virtual places, used during or outside school hours:

- a) A campus of the school
- b) Online or virtual school environments made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child or student (including email, intranet systems, software applications, collaboration tools, and online services)
- c) Other locations provided by the school or through a third-party provider for a child or student to use including, but not limited to, locations used for:
 - i. camps
 - ii. approved homestay accommodation;
 - iii. delivery of education and training such as registered training organisations, TAFEs, non-school senior secondary providers or another school; or (iv) sporting events, excursions, competitions or other events.

"School staff"⁽¹⁾ means in a non-Government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:

- i. directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
- ii. a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary) engaged by the school governing authority to perform child-related work

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- iii. a minister of religion, a religious leader or an employee or officer of a religious body associated with the school.

"Student" ⁽¹⁾ means a person who is enrolled at or attends the school.

"Volunteer" ⁽¹⁾ means a person who performs work without remuneration or reward for the school or school boarding premises in the school environment or school boarding premises environment.

"LGBTIQA+" is an evolving acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual.

⁽¹⁾ As defined in Ministerial Order 1359.

⁽²⁾ As defined in the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005

⁽³⁾ As defined in the Worker Screening Act 2020

3. Application

This policy:

- applies to all College Board members, school staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students.
- applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided by for a student's use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers.
- should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to section 5. Referenced Documents.

4. Statement of Policy

SEDA College (Victoria) is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families.

We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

We have zero tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments.

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

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

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students,

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students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as LGBTQIA+ and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

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

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

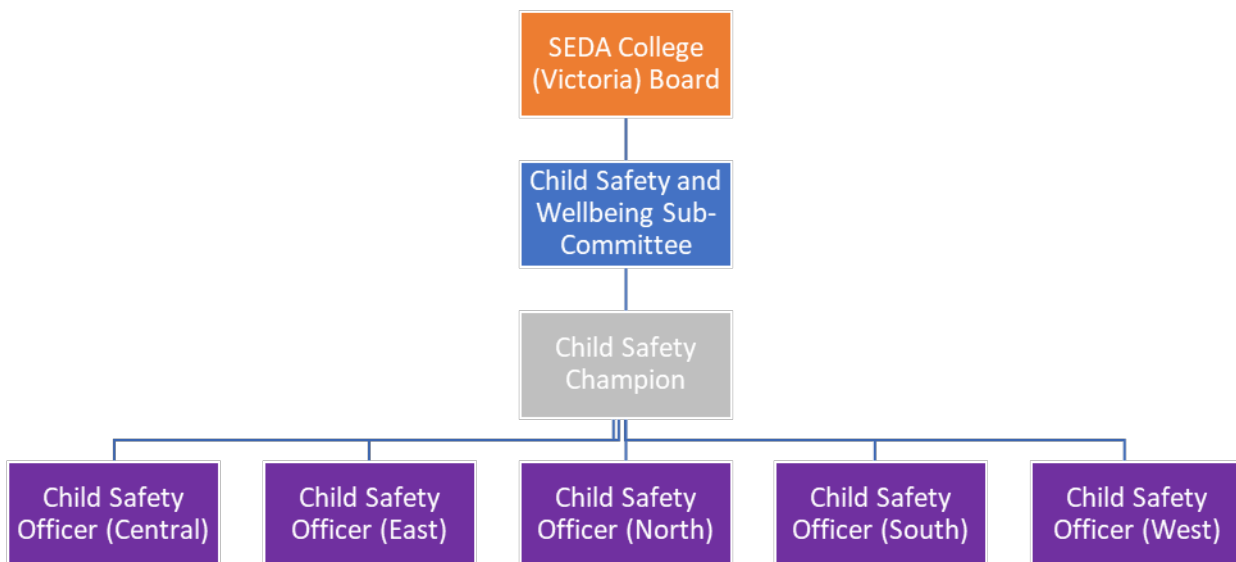
4.1 Roles and responsibilities

a) College Board

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

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community
- ensure that child safety is a regular 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 employees and members

The Board have formulated a structure to ensure that they have oversight over the Child Safety framework within the College which is as follows:



- Board Child Safety and Wellbeing Sub-Committee (Minimum 2 Directors, Principal, Director of Business Services and Child Safety Champion)
- Child Safety Champion (Assistant Principal Education)
- Child Safety Officer for each region (Regional Manager North, South, East, West and Central)

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Our Finance and Risk Sub-Committee monitors the Child Safety Risk Register.

The Child Safety Champion (CSC) will support the Principal in implementing our child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training. The Principal and CSC are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents. The responsibilities of the child safety champion are outlined in the [Guidance for child safety champions](#). In addition to these roles, our CSC is also responsible for:

- attending the Child Safety and Wellbeing Sub-Committee meetings
- for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Anyone in our school community can approach them if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- 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 Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and Child Safety Risk Register.

b) College Executive team

Our College Executive team (comprising the Principal, Assistant Principals and Director of Business services) is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

The College Executive will:

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

c) School staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school or the Department of Education and Training, and always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- act in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct on MySEDA
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures on MySEDA, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)

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- 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.

5. Procedures

5.1 Child Safety Code of Conduct

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school. The Child Safety Code of Conduct on MySEDA also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

5.2 Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing

At the College we identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site overnight camps, adventure activities, specific campuses and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our school leadership team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

5.3 Diversity and equity

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

We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on. We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and young people with disabilities
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- international students
- children and young people who identify as LGBTQIA+.

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

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5.4 Establishing a culturally safe environment for First Nations people

At SEDA College (Victoria) we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

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

5.5 Student empowerment

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

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the school to ensure a sense of belonging, implementing our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships, our Student Code of Conduct and our school values.

We inform students of their rights through our student induction and give them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers. We ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time. Students and families can also access information on how to report concerns through our Learning Management System (MySEDA).

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

5.6 Family engagement

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 family engagement, we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

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:

- Feedback gathered through MySEDA, student, staff, and parent meetings and other communications.
- all of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents on MySEDA or in hard copy by request.
- Bulletin notices and emails 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.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed digitally.

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5.7 Staff recruitment

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

When engaging staff to perform child-related work we follow our Staffing Policy to ensure we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance, Police Check or equivalent background check such as a Victorian Institute of 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.

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

- the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures 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.

Staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. This will be done by regular performance reviews and training.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our school and department policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

All volunteers are required to comply with all of our policies.

5.8 Child safety knowledge, skills and awareness

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

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

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

- our school's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices
- completing the Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations online module annually
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students

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- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment.

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

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

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

5.9 Complaints and reporting processes

SEDA College Victoria 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 school's Complaint Policy. The Complaints Policy can be found on MySEDA.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers must follow our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures on MySEDA. Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school.

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

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

Our Student Wellbeing Policy and Anti-Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

5.10 Communications

SEDA College (Victoria) 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 and Wellbeing Policy, Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy

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- displaying PROTECT posters digitally
- updates in our College bulletin on MySEDA
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at Board meetings, school leadership meetings and staff meetings

5.11 Privacy and information sharing

The College collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws. For information on how our school collects, uses, and discloses information refer to the College's Privacy Policy.

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with our Record Keeping and Information Management Policy.

5.12 Review of child safety practices

At SEDA College (Victoria), we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

- review and improve our policy annually or after any significant child safety incident
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community.

6. Referenced Documents

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

- Anti-Discrimination and Bullying (including cyber) Policy
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- Student Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Student Wellbeing Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Record Keeping and Information Management Policy
- External Providers Policy
- Staffing Policy

Other referenced documents include:

- Ministerial Order 1359
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005
- Education Training and Reform Act 2006
- Worker Screening Act 2020

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7. Policy History

Version	Policy Owner	Approval Date	Effective Date	Summary of Changes
V1	Principal	11/11/16	11/11/16	
V2	Principal	30/01/18	31/01/18	Appendix 4: Updated to reflect staff roles
V3	Principal	7/02/19	7/02/19	General formatting Reference to <i>Wrongs Amendment (Organisational Child Abuse) Act 2017</i> Section 4.5 adding an 'and' for the two dot points Stipulate that the policy will be reviewed every year Updated Appendix 5 Incident Report Form to include reference to Insurer Updated to provide more detail regarding annual training Clarify that risk management is campus specific
V4	Principal	10/01/20	10/01/20	Remove original Appendix 4 and reference to Appendix 4 Stipulate that the Child Protection Code of Conduct Guidelines for employees and volunteers takes into account professional codes. Update links Edit original Appendix 5 (now 4) to further clarify secure storage arrangements and process Clarify roles and responsibilities by inserting a new section.
V5	Principal	17/08/20	17/08/20	Updated Appendix 1 definition of who is mandated to report, due to legislative change.
V6	Principal	17/12/21	17/12/21	Updated definitions and general formatting to new SEDA College template
Rename	Principal	20/06/2022	01/07/22	Rename Policy to 'Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy". Separate reporting obligations to create a new policy and align this policy with Ministerial Order 1359.

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