



# Child Safe Policy

Mountain District Christian School has developed this Child Safe Policy as an overarching document that provides key elements of our approach to protecting children from abuse. It forms the foundation of the School's procedures, practices, decision-making processes and ultimately the School's culture with respect to child safety.

The School's Child Safe Policy has been approved and endorsed by the School's Board of Directors and is regularly reviewed by the Board.

## Objectives

This Policy provides the framework for:

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

## Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

At Mountain District Christian School, we recognise that all of mankind is made in the image of God. We understand the implications this has for the great and privileged responsibility we have for the children in our care. As such we have a zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The School regards its child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture.

## Child Safe Values and Principles

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

1. All children have the right to be safe.
2. The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
3. The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected.
4. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Safe Code of Conduct and Staff and Student Professional Boundaries policy.
5. The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.
6. Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our School community.
7. Procedures are in place to screen all staff, Direct Contact Volunteers\*\*, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers who have direct contact with children.
8. Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.

9. Child safety training is mandatory for all Board of Directors members, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers.
10. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the School community.
11. Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Children and other children who are vulnerable (such as children in out-of-home care or children of diverse sexuality) have the right to special care and support.
12. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

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

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

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

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

### **Child Safety Program**

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

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

- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and associated key risk indicators
- clear procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse
- strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, parents/carers and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters
- procedures for recruiting and screening Board of Directors members, staff, Direct Contact Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers
- procedures for reporting reportable conduct and/or misconduct
- pastoral care strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe
- policies with respect to cultural diversity and students with disabilities
- a child safety training program
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children
- guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality
- policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Victorian Child Safe Standards)

- a system for continuous review and improvement.

As a part of Mountain District Christian School's induction process, all staff and Direct Contact Volunteers are required to complete a selection of training modules on the content of our Child Safety Program.

Ongoing child safety training is provided at least annually.

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

### **Responsibilities**

Child safety is everyone's responsibility. At Mountain District Christian School, the Board of Directors and staff, as well as Volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. Specific responsibilities include:

#### **Board of Directors**

Each member of the Board of Directors is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the School's Child Safe Policy and the Child Safety Program to be effectively implemented within the School and are responsible for holding the Principal and the Executive Team accountable for effective implementation.

#### **The Principal**

The Principal is responsible, and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Safe Policy and the School's Child Safety Program are implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child safety culture is maintained within the School.

#### **The School's Child Safety Officers**

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

#### **Staff Members**

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

#### **Direct Contact Volunteers**

All Direct Contact Volunteers, as defined in this policy, are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Safety Program, particularly this Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct, and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse.

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

#### **Indirect Contact Volunteers**

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

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

All Indirect Contact Volunteers are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct.

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

### **Third Party Contractors**

All Third Party Contractors engaged by the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment.

Third Party Contractors include, for example, maintenance and building personnel, consultants, casual teachers, tutors, sports coaches and School cleaners.

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

All Third Party Contractors engaged by the School are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct.

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

### **External Education Providers**

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

The delivery of such a course may take place on School premises or elsewhere.

All External Education Providers engaged by the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment.

All External Education Providers engaged by the School are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct.

Mountain District Christian School may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the External Education Provider.

### **Reporting Child Abuse Concerns**

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

Staff, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, Volunteers, students, parents/carers and other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse or grooming are asked to contact the School's Senior Child Safety Officer, The Principal, Jason Riding, by phoning 9756 7244 or emailing [jriding@mdcs.vic.edu.au](mailto:jriding@mdcs.vic.edu.au).

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

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

### **Policy and Program Review**

Mountain District Christian School is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Safety Program. The Program is regularly reviewed for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child safety related laws, regulations and standards.