



NORTH GEELONG SECONDARY COLLEGE

CHILD SAFE POLICY

PURPOSE

The child safe environments policy sets out the school's approach to maintaining a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe. It provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

This policy applies to:

All staff, volunteers, contractors and whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people, across a range of school forums (e.g. camps, online) and outside of school hours. Partner organisations will be made aware of the policy and the school's underlying philosophy towards the care of children.

Statement of Commitment and principles:

North Geelong Secondary College is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

North Geelong Secondary College has zero tolerance for child abuse.

North Geelong Secondary College 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 North Geelong Secondary College 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.

In its planning, decision-making and operations North Geelong Secondary College will

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
7. Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues;
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

This policy outlines the expectations and responsibilities that are embedded in the school culture and practices at North Geelong Secondary College. The various elements of the policy align with the school Values of Respect, Excellence, Achievement and Diversity. The Education and Reform Act, Ministerial Orders, DET guidelines on safety and conduct, and the VIT Professional code of conduct inform the processes and practices at NGSC and are inherently the foundation principles of the school's commitment to a child safe environment.

A child safe culture:

The school's culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

Personnel, roles and responsibility:

School leaders and managers will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's Code of Conduct. The school's Code of Conduct sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Human Resources, Practices and Training:

The school applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. We will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. All prospective staff and volunteers are required to undergo National Criminal History Records check and maintain a valid Working with Children Check.

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint:

The school has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. Immediate action will include reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection or another appropriate agency and notifying the principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns. The school will take action to respond to a complaint. Further information can be found in the NGSC Mandatory Reporting Policy, available on the school's website.

Risk reduction and management:

The School believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.

The school council expects all applications for camps and outdoor activities to be accompanied by relevant risk assessments.

When engaging with partner organisations or external activity providers, the school will ensure that there are appropriate risk assessments and management in place.

Further information can be found in the NGSC Camps and Excursions Policy.

Listening to Children:

The school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/carers. We encourage child and parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/carers to understand their rights and their responsibilities.

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

Further information can be found in the NGSC Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy.

Confidentiality and Privacy:

This school collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law. The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the School Privacy Policy. The school provides the School Privacy document to parents/carers during the enrolment process.

Policy review and evaluation:

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school community.

Related policies and processes at NGSC undergo review on a regular basis (i.e. every two years or in line with changes/updates to DET policies).

Implementation:

- NGSC will have zero tolerance of child abuse. The child abuse includes physical violence, sexual offences, serious emotional or psychological abuse and serious neglect.
- All people engaged or recruited for child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a current Working with Children Check and/or VIT teacher registration to provide evidence for the NGSC's records. This is consistent with the NGSC Staff Register Policy and Working with Children Check Policy
- Implement the NGSC Mandatory Reporting Policy and ensure new teachers are inducted and that it is included in the staff manual that is available to all staff. The Mandatory Reporting policy articulates legislative requirements for staff and advice on when and how to make reports.
- Any allegations of abuse and/or safety concerns and any subsequent school investigations will be documented and securely stored
- The induction process for volunteers will include guidance on how to respond if they have concerns about a child's safety
- Ensure appropriate supervision of all classes, excursions, camps and school environment. This is consistent with the NGSC Excursion, Incursion, Onsite Supervision policies and Camps Guidelines, which articulate expectations and risk management strategies. In turn, these align with DET policies and procedures.
- NGSC is committed to cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability by making appropriate accommodations
- Key staff will be identified within the school that have knowledge of child safety issues and will act as the key contact point for others who have questions or concerns or want to report an allegation of child abuse. These key staff are the Principal team, the Wellbeing Leader and Student Wellbeing Manager and others as identified in the Mandatory Reporting policy.
- Proactive strategies to address e-safety (i.e. Allannah and Madeline Foundation, Cyber safety activities)
- Implementation of the bullying and harassment mitigation strategies as described in the NGSC Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy

Definitions:

Ministerial Order 870 provides definitions, including:

Child abuse includes—

- any act committed against a child involving:
 - a sexual offence or
 - an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
- the infliction, on a child, of:
 - physical violence or
 - serious emotional or psychological harm
 - serious neglect of a child.

Child-connected work means 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.

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.

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

Related Policies and documents:

Ministerial Order 199

Ministerial Order 870

Education and Training Reform Act 2006

DET policies and guidelines

The Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct

<http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/media/documents/imported-files/spl/Code-of-Conduct-2015.pdf>

NGSC Code of Conduct

NGSC Statement of Values

NGSC Policies – Mandatory Reporting Policy, Suicide Prevention Policy, Self Harm Policy, Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy including Bullying and Harassment Policy, Supervision Policies

NGSC register for Working with Children check

'Calmer Classrooms', http://www.ccyp.vic.gov.au/childsafetycommissioner/publications/orgs_resources.htm

'Framework for Student Support Services in Government Schools – Teacher Resource'

E-Smart school membership

Evaluation:

School Council last ratified this policy on...	18 June, 2019	REVIEW DATE June 2021
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