Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy



Help for non-English speakers
If you need help to understand this policy, please contact info@ae.edu.au.

1.0 Rationale

The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates Acknowledge Education's (Stott's College's) commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview to AE's approach to implementing Ministerial Order 1359 which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

It informs everyone of their 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.

2.0 Scope

This policy:

- applies to all staff, volunteers, and contractors whether they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to board members where indicated.
- 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 including locations managed by third-party providers, such as AE's boarding and homestay programs.
- applies to complaints and concerns relating to child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, school boarding premises staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors, or other persons while connected to a school environment or school boarding premises environment.
- should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related college policies section below.

3.0 Regulatory Context

3.1 11 Child Safe Standards (Vic)

3.2 Ministerial Order 1359 Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises

3.3 Education and Training Reform Act 2006

3.4 Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS Act)

3.5 National Code of Practice for Providers of Education And Training to Overseas Students 2018

3.6 Children, Youth and Families Act 2005

3.7 Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)

4.0 Statement of commitment to child safety

Acknowledge Education (AE) / Stott's College 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 no 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 students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQA+) 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.

We are committed to ensuring that all child safety measures are implemented in a way that respects and upholds each student's rights to privacy, access to information, social connection, and full participation in learning.

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.

We recognise that Acknowledge Education owes all students a duty of care. This includes taking reasonable measures to protect students from reasonably foreseeable risks of injury, ensuring that the school environment (including premises and facilities) is safe, and taking reasonable precautions to prevent the abuse of a child by any individual associated with the organisation while the child is under our care, supervision or authority. We acknowledge that additional or heightened measures may be required to discharge this duty for younger students and students with disabilities.

5.0 Policy/Procedure

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 also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

5.2 Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing

At our school 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 and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

In identifying and managing risks, staff and leaders must actively assess whether a "substantial risk" of child sexual abuse exists. While "substantial risk" is not defined in legislation, it is determined based on the specific circumstances and requires professional judgement. Factors to consider when identifying a substantial risk include:

- the likelihood or probability that a child may become the victim of a sexual offence
- the nature of the relationship between the child and the adult who may pose a risk
- the background of the adult, including any past or alleged misconduct
- any vulnerabilities of the child that may increase their risk (e.g. age, disability, isolation, or dependency)
- any other relevant information that indicates a risk of sexual harm to a child

Where a substantial risk is identified or reasonably suspected, staff must take immediate and proportionate action to reduce or remove that risk. The College must not negligently fail to take such action.

In discharging its duty of care, AE takes reasonable steps to identify and mitigate foreseeable risks of harm to students, including risks arising from the physical environment, activities, and interactions with staff, volunteers, contractors, and other students. This includes ensuring that the state of the premises, and any actions or omissions in relation to the premises, do not expose students or others to risk of injury or damage.

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 Risk and Compliance Committee will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

In identifying and managing risks, AE ensures that risk mitigation strategies are proportionate and do not unnecessarily limit a child or student's rights to privacy, access to information, social connections, or learning opportunities. Staff and volunteers are required to balance safety considerations with student rights by:

- applying the least restrictive risk controls possible to maintain safety
- respecting student privacy and confidentiality in line with legal obligations
- supporting continued access to education, peer relationships, and support services

- considering the individual needs, maturity, and circumstances of each student when implementing risk controls
- seeking guidance from leadership where there is uncertainty in balancing safety and student rights

5.2.1 Failure to Protect a Child from Sexual Abuse

All persons in positions of authority within Acknowledge Education must take reasonable steps to reduce or remove any substantial risk that a child may become the victim of a sexual offence by an adult associated with the organisation.

This includes a positive obligation to actively identify whether a substantial risk exists, based on the circumstances and available information.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- acting immediately on any knowledge, suspicion, or identified risk
- implementing risk controls, supervision, or removal of individuals where appropriate
- escalating concerns to leadership and external authorities where required
- ensuring environments, practices, and systems do not enable abuse
- assessing and documenting risks using available information, professional judgement, and organisational risk management processes (including the Child Safety Risk Register)

A person must not ignore, minimise, or fail to act on indicators that, taken together, may amount to a substantial risk.

A failure to take reasonable steps in these circumstances may constitute the criminal offence of failure to protect under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic).

The College and its staff must not negligently fail to reduce or remove a substantial risk of a child becoming the victim of a sexual offence. Any failure to act on known or reasonably identifiable risks may constitute a breach of duty of care and a criminal offence.

5.3 Establishing a culturally safe environment

Acknowledge Education fosters a culturally safe environment in which diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.

At AE, 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.

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

- seeking to engage a mix of Staff, Volunteers and Contractors that is reflective of the diversity in the school community by:
    - engaging Staff, Volunteers and Contractors at every level that are representative of the school community.

    - acknowledging the National Government Apology to Australia's Indigenous People for the forced removal of Aboriginal children (Sorry Day)
    - co-ordinating the school's participation in National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week, which celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.
- creating a physical environment that is respectful of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, including:
    - the display of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags
    - developing information that is culturally appropriate and includes images portraying cultural diversity - creating multilingual resources as needed.

At AE, we prioritise child safety, fostering a culture reinforced by leadership and governance. We publicly commit to child safety, ensuring our statement, policy, and code of conduct are accessible to all. We regularly review procedures for clarity, define roles, and maintain child safety record-keeping practices.

At AE we believe that the safety and wellbeing of children is dependent on the existence of a child safe culture within our community, which is reinforced by leaders and the governance structures of the organisation. Acknowledge Education makes a public commitment to child safety and wellbeing. This is reinforced by publishing our commitment statement, policy, code of conduct and readily accessible to all stakeholders. AE regularly reviews and ensures all procedures are clear and roles and responsibilities are defined. AE also establishes child safety and protection record keeping procedures.

The Board will review the School's child safety policy suite as part of its responsibility to promote a child safe culture.

5.4 Student empowerment

Children and young people are empowered about their rights and participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

To support child safety and wellbeing at AE, 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.

We inform students of their rights through programs to educate them about all their rights, including their rights to safety, information and participation, access to sexual abuse prevention and related information in an age-appropriate way.

AE also implements strategies to 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. A few of the strategies are listed below:

- we know that students feel empowered when they know their voice is heard and their opinions are welcome hence, we enable students to share their feedback. Various feedback modes are available such as suggestions or concerns that can anonymously be completed; surveys are collected every 10 weeks.
- Provide information through the curriculum via relevant subject areas to promote:
    - Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships
    - School-wide Positive Behaviour Support Framework
    - Safe Schools

    - Bully Stoppers
    - Vic SRC's Introduction to Student Voice
    - eSmart.
- Provide contact information for independent child and youth advocacy services or helplines.
- Empower students with the knowledge that adults are accountable and that students have a right to safety.
- Promoting student wellness and a positive mindset - Smiling Mind

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.

5.5 Family engagement

Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing

We use the term family to refer to any parent, caregiver, or guardian who cares for children and youth. We rely most heavily on the term "family" to capture the varied contexts in which children live and are cared for.

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, at AE 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:

- seek input from families and the community through surveys, parent-teacher meetings.
- all our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents on AE's website and at orientation.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school.

5.6 Diversity and equity

Equity is upheld, and diverse needs are respected.

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 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

LGBTIQ+. Strategies that are in place to support

diversity and equity.

- attendance monitoring to promote student engagement.
- support services for academic or wellbeing support.
- student mentoring

In discharging its duty of care, AE recognises that different and sometimes greater measures may be required to ensure the safety and wellbeing of younger students and students with disabilities, including through enhanced supervision, tailored risk controls, and appropriate environmental adjustments.

5.7 Suitable staff and volunteers

Staff and volunteers are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

At AE, 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.

5.8 Staff recruitment

When recruiting staff, we follow strict recruitment policies and guidelines, and these are incorporated into the staff recruitment and code of conducts:

- Group Recruitment Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct

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.

- **NOTE:** At AE / Stott's College, ALL staff employed at the Melbourne (Exhibition St) campus, irrespective of whether they are engaged in child-related work, are required to hold a current WWCC.

5.9 Visitors

Our ***Visitor Access and Sign-In Policy and Procedures*** outlines our approach to managing visitors to campus while upholding our duty to ensure their safety, alongside that of staff and students. The Policy provides a consistent approach to identifying and managing visitors, supporting effective campus security, emergency response, safeguarding, and compliance with health and safety, child safety and other legal obligations. Clear sign-in procedures help maintain a safe, well-managed, and professional campus environment while preserving the institution's open and welcoming culture.

5.10 Staff induction

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 and Wellbeing Policy (this document)
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures and, including following the PROTECT Four Critical Actions for Schools;
- any other child safety and wellbeing appropriate to the nature of the role.

5.11 Ongoing supervision and management of staff

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 AE policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

5.12 Child safety knowledge, skills, and awareness

Child Safe Champions

AE has appointed a team of Child Safe Champions. Child Safe Champions support and promote a child-safe environment. Champions have the authority to influence others and have knowledge, professional judgement, and ongoing training in child safety and wellbeing. Key responsibilities are outlined in the Guidance for child safety champions. Broadly, these include:

- Promoting child safety culture
- Providing support and guidance
- Training and educating
- Monitoring, reviewing and reporting

Child Safe Champions report on relevant updates and activities via the VCE Quality and Compliance Committee, which is a sub-committee of the Board of Directors. Child Safe Champions at AE are:

- The Head of School
- The International Student Coordinator
- The Head of Quality and Risk
- The Head of Operations

5.13 Ongoing staff education and training

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 policies, procedures, codes, and practices
- completing the Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations online module annually
- recognising indicators of child harm, including grooming* behaviours and 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 while upholding student rights to privacy, access to information, social connections, and learning opportunities.

  * **Grooming** refers to conduct where a person aged 18 years or older communicates, by any means (including words or actions, and regardless of whether a response is received), with:
    - a person under the age of 16 years; or
    - a person who has care, supervision, or authority over a person under the age of 16 years,

  with the intention of facilitating the involvement of the person under 16 years of age in a sexual offence, whether committed by the individual or by another person aged 18 years or older (per section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic))

5.14 Leadership team training and education

To ensure our leadership team 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
- AE's child safety and risk management policies, procedures, codes, and practices
- how to ensure risk management decisions appropriately balance child safety with student rights, including privacy, access to education, and social participation

5.15 Complaints and reporting processes

Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused

AE fosters a culture that encourages staff, 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 Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedures.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff, including school leadership team employees and homestay providers must follow our *Guidelines to responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse*. 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

In responding to incidents, disclosures, or suspicions of child abuse, staff must also consider whether the information available indicates a substantial risk of a sexual offence

occurring. Where such a risk is identified, immediate action must be taken to reduce or remove the risk, including escalation to leadership and reporting to relevant authorities where required.

All adults (18 years and over) must report to Victoria Police where they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child under 16 years, in accordance with section 327 of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic). Information must be disclosed to a police officer as soon as it is practicable to do so, unless the person has a reasonable excuse* for not doing so and a description of the action required.

***Reasonable Excuse for not reporting to police:** You may have a reasonable excuse for not reporting information about child sexual abuse to police if, for example:

- the person fears on reasonable grounds for the safety of any person (other than the person reasonably believed to have been the perpetrator were the person to disclose the information to police and the failure to disclose the information to police is a reasonable response in the circumstances; or
- the person believes on reasonable grounds that the information has already been disclosed to police by another person.

Under the Reportable Conduct Scheme, the CEO is required to notify the Social Service Regulator of all allegations of reportable conduct by employees, contractors and volunteers, and to ensure the allegations are investigated.

5.16 Environment

Promotion of safety and wellbeing in physical and online environments, while minimising the opportunity for harm.

AE understand the ongoing risks faced by children in changing physical and online environments and is committed to minimising the harm by ensuring all environments controlled by the organisation are safe. Furthermore, Acknowledge Education is committed to providing support and education for the safe use of online tools. This includes fulfilling our duty to ensure that the condition of the premises, and any acts or omissions in relation to those premises, do not give rise to reasonably foreseeable risks of injury or harm to students or other persons.

AE 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 college's activities, physical and online environments, and the characteristics of the students.

AE ensures that strategies to promote safety in physical and online environments are designed and implemented in a way that does not unnecessarily restrict a student's rights to privacy, access to information, social connections, or learning opportunities. Risk controls are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain appropriate, proportionate, and student-centred.

5.17 Communications

AE is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- ensuring that key child safety policies are available on our website including the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document), Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory

Reporting) Policy and Procedure
- displaying PROTECT posters around the school.
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at senior managers' meetings and board meetings.

5.18 Privacy and information sharing

AE 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: Privacy Policy.

5.19 Records management

AE creates, maintains and disposes of records relevant to child safety and wellbeing in accordance with Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) Recordkeeping Standards, including records of reporting and investigation, training and development and minimum retention periods regarding incidents or allegations of child sexual abuse. Policies, procedures and retention periods are captured in our ***7.3.3 Student record management policy and procedures.***

5.20 Review of child safety practices

Implementation of the Child Safety Standards is regularly reviewed and improved

At AE, we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices under the oversight of the Board of Directors as part of its responsibility to promote a child safe culture.

We will:

- review and improve our policy every 2 years 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.

5.21 Mandatory Reporting

Definition and Legislative Context

Mandatory reporting refers to the legal obligation under **section 184 of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)* (CYF Act)** for certain professional groups to report a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection from **physical or sexual abuse** to Child Protection authorities.

AE is committed to ensuring all staff understand and comply with their mandatory reporting obligations in accordance with Victorian legislation and regulatory requirements.

Mandated Reporters and Responsibilities

Mandated reporters are those professional groups prescribed under the CYF Act, including but not limited to:

- Registered medical practitioners
- Nurses
- Midwives
- Registered teachers

- Early childhood teachers and their supervisors
- School principals
- Police officers
- People in religious ministry
- Registered psychologists
- Youth justice workers
- Out-of-home care workers (excluding voluntary foster and kinship carers)

Mandated reporters must make a report where, in the course of their professional duties, they form a **reasonable belief** that a child is in need of protection from physical or sexual abuse.

Reasonable Belief: You have a 'reasonable belief' if a reasonable person in the same circumstances as you would believe that an adult had sexually abused a child, for the same reasons you believed it. For example, you might form a reasonable belief that a child has been sexually abused if:

- the child tells you they have been sexually abused
- the child tells you they know someone who has been sexually abused (which may be a way of talking about themselves)
- someone who knows the child tells you the child has been sexually abused
- you observe signs of sexual abuse in the child
- you are a qualified professional who observes the child's behaviour or development, which leads you to believe the child has been sexually abused.

https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-disclose-offence

Circumstances Requiring a Report

A mandated reporter must make a report when:

- They have formed a **reasonable belief** that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical or sexual abuse; and
- The child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm.

Reporting Requirements

Mandated reporters must:

- **Make a report as soon as practicable** after forming a reasonable belief
- **Make a report on each occasion** they form a new reasonable belief
- **Make a report even if another staff member, including the Principal, does not share their belief**
- **Not delay reporting** in order to seek permission or conduct further investigation

Protective Interveners

Reports must be made to the relevant **Child Protection service within the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)**, which is the designated protective intervener under the CYF Act. In Victoria, this is

Where there is an immediate risk to a child's safety, staff must also contact **Victoria Police**.

Institutional Expectations

All staff, including non-mandated reporters, are expected to:

- Act in accordance with this policy and the College's child safety procedures
- Report any child safety concerns through the appropriate internal and external channels
- Participate in training to ensure awareness of mandatory reporting obligations

Failure to comply with mandatory reporting obligations may result in disciplinary action and may constitute a breach of the law.

6.0 Roles & Responsibilities

Board and CEO Responsibilities

The Board is required to approve the school's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and to ensure all programs for under 18 are being effectively implemented. Each member must:

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at board meetings
- undertake annual training on child safety, such as via the Child Safe Standards School Council Training slide presentation available on PROTECT.
- approve updates to, and act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to employees and board members
- review the School's child safety policy suite as part of its responsibility to promote a child safe culture
- when hiring school employees, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe. At AE, the Board's employment duties are delegated to the CEO who is bound by this policy.
- understand the nature of the operations and the child safety risks associated with these operations.
- ensure that AE has appropriate resources to effectively implement its Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and all programs for under 18.
- ensure that AE has appropriate processes for receiving and considering information regarding child safety issues and can respond in a timely way to that information.
- ensure that AE has and implements processes to ensure that the college is complying with its legal and regulatory obligations with respect to child safety; and
- ensure that AE has and implements processes to ensure ongoing monitoring to verify the provision and use of the resources that have been allocated to the management of child safety issues within the AE and their effectiveness.
- ensure that duty of care obligations are upheld to students by taking reasonable steps to protect them from foreseeable risks of harm, including risks arising from premises, activities, and individuals associated with the organisation.

The CEO/Director of Studies' Responsibilities

The Board delegates day-to-day management of AE to the CEO and HoS. The CEO and HoS understand that fulfilling their roles and responsibilities in this policy does not displace or discharge them from any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that

a child is at risk of child abuse. The CEO is ultimately responsible, and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that:

- ensure that effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed.
- notify the Social Service Regulator of all allegations of reportable conduct by employees, contractors and volunteers, and to ensure the allegations are investigated (CEO).
- 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, and 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.
- ensure that AE's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and all programs for under 18 are implemented effectively with available resources effectively deployed.
- ensure that staff are appointed as per the recruitment policy and inducted and trained.
- ensure that any child safety incidents arising are dealt with in line with policy and in a timely manner.
- ensure that the Board receives regular reports with respect to child safety matters.
- ensure that AE is complying with its legal and regulatory obligations with respect to child safety.
- The CEO is responsible for informing the staff about this policy and making it publicly available.
- ensure that policies, procedures and practices support staff and volunteers to effectively identify and mitigate risks while balancing and protecting student rights, including privacy, access to information, social connection and participation in learning.

International Student Coordinator

- Support enrolment, orientation and transition activities of international students into the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) program.
- Support compliance with the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS Act) and the National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018
- Act as the primary liaison between international students, parents/carers, homestay providers and school leadership.
- Coordinate welfare and wellbeing supports.
- Provide cultural adjustment support and facilitate programs that promote inclusion and engagement within the school community.
- Ensure international students understand school policies, codes of conduct and Child Safety expectations.
- Support subject selection and pathway planning in collaboration with the VCE Coordinator and teaching staff.
- Assist with regulatory reporting, audits and compliance reviews relating to international student programs.

Homestay Coordinator

- Manage and oversee homestay arrangements for under-18 international students, ensuring safe, supportive, and compliant accommodation.
- Recruit, screen, and train homestay families in line with regulatory requirements and the school's Child Safety and welfare policies.
- Conduct regular monitoring and welfare checks of homestay placements to ensure the wellbeing, safety, and academic support of students.
- Act as the main point of contact for students and homestay families, addressing issues, conflicts, or concerns promptly.
- Maintain accurate records of all homestay placements, including agreements, checks, and incident reports.
- Provide orientation and guidance to homestay families about cultural expectations, VCE requirements, and child safety obligations.
- Liaise with the International Student Coordinator, VCE Coordinator, and Student Wellbeing Team to ensure consistent support and compliance with ESOS and the National Code.
- Implement risk management strategies to identify and mitigate potential issues in homestay arrangements.
- Facilitate communication between students, parents, and the school regarding welfare, academic progress, and any homestay-related matters.
- Participate in audits, reporting, and review processes to ensure homestay practices meet regulatory and school standards.

Head of Quality and Risk

Our Head of Quality and Risk is responsible for monitoring AE's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Anyone in our school community should approach Head of Quality and Risk if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

Staff and Volunteer Responsibilities

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by AE or the Department of Education and Training, and always follow AE's policies and procedures.
- act in accordance with AE's Code of Conduct
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, 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.
- identify, assess and mitigate risks in school environments, including determining whether a substantial risk of child sexual abuse exists and taking appropriate action to reduce or remove that risk, in a manner that is proportionate and does not unnecessarily compromise a child or student's rights to privacy, access to information, social connections, and learning opportunities
- Comply with legal obligations under the failure to disclose offence (section 327 of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)), including reporting relevant information to Victoria Police as soon

as it is practicable to do so

Our school has also established a VCE Quality and Compliance Committee. This committee meets regularly to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing. A student representative (such as the School captain / Wellbeing School team representative) is invited to attend at the beginning of the meetings to provide feedback, represent the student voice on matters important to them and provide input into school strategies.

Our VCE Q&C Committee monitors the Child Safety Risk Register.

7.0 Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, readers should refer to the Child Safe Standards – Definitions provided by the Victorian Government for the definitions of terms used in relation to the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 1359.

8.0 Related Documents

Policies and procedures documenting how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

AE will maintain a suite of policies and procedures relating to child protection, safety, and wellbeing. These will directly address the Child Safe Standards as well as all other laws and regulations relating to child safety. These documents will be available publicly so that all staff, volunteers, students, and stakeholders are aware of the position, policies, and processes of the organisation.

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

- Child Safety Risk Register
- 2.4.1 Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedures
- VCE-CC-03 Child Safety Code of Conduct
- VCE-GUI-06 Guidelines to responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse
- VCE-POL-02 Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- VCE-POL-07 Supervision Policy
- VCE-POL-08 Volunteer Policy
- VCE-POL-09 Excursions Policy
- 2.3.4.1 Visitor Access and Sign-In Policy and Procedures
- VCE-POL-05 Bullying Prevention Policy
- 7.3.3 Student record management policy and procedures

Other related documents

- Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools
- Four Critical Actions for Schools
- Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending
- Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending
- Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools

9.0 Document Information

Document Name	Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
Document Number	VCE-POL-01
Purpose	Compliance with Child Safety Standards & Ministerial Order
Audience	☒Staff | ☒Students| ☒Public
Category	Learning Environment
Subcategory	Child Safety and Wellbeing
Approval Date	28 September 2023
Effective Date	28 September 2023
Last date of approval	08/05/2026
Next Review Date	08/05/2028 (Review required at least every two years, or after any significant child safety incident)
Policy Advisors	Head of School, VCE Coordinator, Homestay Coordinator, Head of Quality and Risk
Approving Authority	Board of Directors

10.0 Change Log

Date	Version	By	Notes
27/04/2026	2.2	Head of Quality and Risk	• Strengthened guidance throughout to ensure child abuse responses are proportionate and child-centred, balancing safety with students' rights to privacy, access to information, social connections, and continued participation in learning. • Explicitly incorporated AE's duty of care to students, including protection from foreseeable risks, safe premises, prevention of child abuse, and the need for proportionate and, where required, heightened safeguards for younger students and students with disabilities. • Added clauses to incorporate the CEOs obligation, as head of the organisation, to notify the Social Service Regulator of all allegations of reportable conduct by employees, contractors and volunteers, and to ensure the allegations are investigated per the Reportable Conduct Scheme. • Added 5.21 mandatory reporting obligations in line with the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005. • Added explicit statements and responsibilities relating to section 327 of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) - a person of or over the age of 18 years 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.

			• Added explanations of 'reasonable belief' and 'reasonable excuse' for not reporting to police. • Added definition of of grooming as per section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) • Added a clear statement identifying the offence relating to *Failure to protect a child from a sexual offence* per the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic). • Added a description of actions required including the requirement to identify whether there is a "substantial risk" • Added information noting as part of the actions required that the College must not negligently fail to reduce or remove the risk
13/02/2026	2.1	Head of Quality and Risk	• Updated section on *Records Management* to reference PROV Recordkeeping Standards and the 7.3.3 Student record management policy and procedures. • Added *Visitors* section on p6, referencing the Visitor Access and Sign-In Policy and Procedures. • Updated Child Safety Champions information to reflect new team approach.
02/12/2025	2.0	Head of Quality and Risk	• Added the following to p6: **NOTE:** At AE / Stott's College, ALL staff employed at the Melbourne (Exhibition St) campus, irrespective of whether they are engaged in child-related work, are required to hold a current WWCC.
05/11/2025	2.0	Head of Quality and Risk	• Policy name updated to Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy to reflect government terminology. • Added information on assistance for non–English speaking individuals. • Updated scope to explicitly include homestay and boarding services. • Added a statement of commitment to child safety, in line with the standard policy template. • Updated roles and responsibilities. • Added Head of VCE as a policy advisor. • Changed the approving authority from the CEO to the Board of Directors.
28 Sep 2023	1.0	Head of Quality Assurance	Review to ensure compliance to cover all requirements of the 11 child safe standards and Ministerial Order