

# Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy



## Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact [info@ae.edu.au](mailto:info@ae.edu.au).

## 1.0 Rationale

The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates Acknowledge Education'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 Child Safe Standards

This policy is framed to comply with the 11 Child Safe Standards and outlines the actions that put in place to keep children and young people safe.

### 3.2 Ministerial Order 1359

The policy further aligns with the Ministerial Order 1359 that outlines how organisations

should manage the risk of child abuse in schools and boarding premises.

To comply to the order the school must:

- develop and put in place risk management strategies.
- record the risks and the actions the school will take to reduce or remove them (risk controls and risk treatments)
- each year, monitor and review child safety and wellbeing risks and assess the effectiveness of risk controls.

### **3.3 National Code of Practice for Providers of Education And Training to Overseas Students 2018**

This policy is compiled to align with National Code of Practice of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018

3.5.1 Standard 5 of the National Code states all registered providers who enrol overseas students under the age of 18 must meet all obligations under Commonwealth and State child protection legislation to ensure the safety and wellbeing of younger overseas students.

## **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.

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.

## **5.0 Policy/Procedure**

### **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.

### **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.

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.

### **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 additionally ensure this via practice to regularly review and ensure all procedures are clear and roles and responsibilities are defined. AE also establishes child safety and protection record keeping procedures.

## **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.

## **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.

### **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

### **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.

#### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **Child safety knowledge, skills, and awareness**

#### **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 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.

#### **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

## **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

## **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.

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.

## **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.

### **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](#).

### **Records management**

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the Department of Education and Training's policy: [Records Managements](#)

### **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.

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.

## **6.0 Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Board and CEO Responsibilities**

The Board is required to approve the schools Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and to ensure all programs for under 18 is 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
- 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.

### **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.
- 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.

### **International Student Coordinator (Child Safety Champion), Homestay Coordinator / Wellbeing Coordinator Responsibilities**

AE has nominated the international student coordinator as the child safety champion to support the CEO to implement AE's child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer training.

The responsibilities of the child safety champion are outlined at [Guidance for child safety champions](#). In addition to these roles, our child safety champion is also responsible for:

- Homestay accommodation
- Health and wellbeing
- Child safe standards
- Cultural and social programming
- Advocacy and support
- Communication and liaison

Our CEO and international student coordinator are the first points of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

## 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.

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:

- 2.4.1 Complaints and Appeals Policy
- 2.4.2 Complaints and Appeals Procedure
- 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

#### Related Department of Education and Training policies

- [Bullying Prevention and Response Policy](#)
- [Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes](#)
- [Complaints Policy](#)
- [Contractor OHS Management Policy](#)
- [Digital Learning in Schools Policy](#)
- [Family Violence Support](#)
- [Protecting Children: Reporting Obligations Policy](#)
- [Policy and Guidelines for Recruitment in Schools](#)
- [Reportable Conduct Policy](#)
- [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#)
- [Supervision of Students Policy](#)
- [Visitors in Schools Policy](#)
- [Volunteers in Schools Policy](#)
- [Working with Children and other Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors](#)

#### 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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff   <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Students   <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public
Category	Learning Environment
Subcategory	Child Safety and Wellbeing
Approval Date	28 September 2023
Effective Date	28 September 2023
Last date of endorsement	19 November 2025
Next Review Date	19 November 2027
Policy Advisor	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
------	---------	----	-------

02/12/2025	2.0	Head of Quality and Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Added the following to p6: <b>NOTE:</b> At AE / Stott's College, <u>ALL</u> 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.</li> </ul>
05/11/2025	2.0	Head of Quality and Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy name updated to Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy to reflect government terminology.</li> <li>Added information on assistance for non-English speaking individuals.</li> <li>Updated scope to explicitly include homestay and boarding services.</li> <li>Added a statement of commitment to child safety, in line with the standard policy template.</li> <li>Updated roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>Added Head of VCE as a policy advisor.</li> <li>Changed the approving authority from the CEO to the Board of Directors.</li> </ul>
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