



# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

## POLICY OVERVIEW

Rivergum Christian College is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people in our community. It outlines the policies, procedures and responsibilities that are enacted in our College to establish and build an environment which is child-safe and child-friendly; where children are respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential.

Rivergum Christian College will seek to ensure that everyone to whom this policy applies is aware of, has had the opportunity to read and understand the policy, and obtain further clarification on the policy and related documents.

## RATIONALE

Child Protection at Rivergum Christian College is based upon the Biblical values of freedom and justice for all people, and an underpinning belief in the dignity and uniqueness of every human being.

Rivergum Christian College strives to be a child safe school and has a strong commitment to the implementation of a safe and well-ordered learning environment, creating a sense of belonging and well-being for the students in its care. We believe learning and personal development are enhanced in such a culture.

While we recognize education is relational and interactive, we understand we have a Duty of Care to our students, ensuring every possible effort is made to protect their safety and well-being while attending school or taking part in activities authorised by the school. It is recognized that the primary responsibility for a child's care and protection lies with the child's family, and, while at school, staff act in *locos parentis*. The College has a legal responsibility for Duty of Care and this is paramount to all Child Protection matters.

This policy is intended to direct both staff and volunteers in their work with students of the school. It provides in writing, details of the processes and procedures relating to the appropriate conduct of Rivergum Christian College staff, volunteers and students that accord with legislation applying in South Australia and the care and protection of children. It also includes guidelines for preventative and proactive practices.

The College will comply with legislative requirements on child protection, including the *Child and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA)*. This includes requiring teachers and the Principal to report to the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL), any suspicion on reasonable grounds that a student has been or is being harmed or at risk of harm.

## POLICY PRINCIPLES

Rivergum Christian College acknowledges that being safe and supported at school is essential for student wellbeing, development and effective learning. The safety and wellbeing of our children is a paramount consideration in all that we do.

We acknowledge the vulnerability of children and young people in our care and take a proactive, preventative, and participatory approach to protecting them through:

- the on-going development of a positive, child safe culture;
- the development, implementation and monitoring of rigorous policies and procedures;
- seeking to ensure that everyone is aware of their responsibilities, vigilant and, if required, prepared to respond in an appropriate and timely manner.

We are committed to:

- supporting the rights of the child as set out in the *UN Conventions of the Rights of the Child*
- acting without hesitation to seek to ensure a child-safe and child-focused environment is maintained at all times,
- valuing and embracing the opinions and views of children,
- abiding by all legislative and regulatory obligations, and striving for our practices to be regarded as best practice and 'beyond compliance',
- empowering children with the skills and knowledge to keep themselves and others safe,
- taking whatever necessary action is required to protect children from physical, sexual, emotional and psychological harm or risk of harm.

## DEFINITIONS

**A child** is a person under 18 years of age.

**A student** is any person regardless of age who is enrolled at the College.

**A member of staff** is anyone employed on a casual or permanent basis to provide the services of Rivergum Christian College - including teachers, administration and non-teaching staff, grounds, maintenance staff and bus drivers.

**Harm (or the risk of harm)** is defined by the *Child and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* (SA) as any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional well-being. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm (or the risk of harm) can be:

- physical
- sexual
- emotional.

**At Risk:** The *Child and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* (SA) states that a child or young person is considered to be at risk if they:

- have suffered harm
- are likely to suffer harm, or
- are likely to be removed from the state for illegal purposes (such as marriage or female genital mutilation).

## SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, parents/carers, children and other individuals involved with the College, whether on a regular or occasional basis. It applies:

- on the school premises
- at functions, excursions, trips or camps organised by the school
- when members of the school community are representing the school.

## IMPLEMENTATION

### 1. A clear and accessible child safety policy

*The Rivergum Christian College Child Protection Policy is a clear and accessible statement of intent in regard to the School's commitment to being a highly regarded Child Safe School through promoting children's wellbeing and safeguarding all children from harm.*

The policy is underpinned by the guiding principles of the National Safe Schools Framework and addresses the requirements of the *Child Safe Environments: Principles of Good Practice (DECD 2012)*, as well as the National Quality Framework, Legislative and School Registration requirements.

The development of the policy has been a consultative process involving a wide cross section of the school community. As part of the annual review, at the beginning of the year, the policy will be appraised by the Executive Team to ensure its currency, review any issues and to guide any implementation, priorities, improvements and/or changes for the year ahead.

The College is committed to a proactive and vigilant approach to protecting all students to the best of our ability. Child protection is a very high priority and embedded in our daily operations. Our policies and procedures are available to our community and feedback for improvement is welcomed and regularly sought.

## **2. Identify and analyse risk of harm**

*Rivergum Christian College has developed and implements a risk management strategy that identifies, assesses and takes steps to minimize the risks of harm to children.*

### Risk Management

- identifying risks
- assessing risks
- minimising the risk of harm.

### Annual Review of Child Protection Policy and Procedures

- The Leadership Team conducts an annual review prior to the start of Term 1.
- A full review with community consultation is undertaken every three years. All changes are to approved by the College Board.

### Documentation and Record-keeping

- Accurate, up to date and confidential records are kept of the following:
  - staff and volunteer training
  - Criminal History Checks
  - reports of any harm or risk of harm and associated documentation.

## **3. Choose suitable employees and volunteers**

*The College is committed to ensuring that all reasonable actions are taken so that only suitable, appropriate and exemplary people are selected to work or volunteer with our students. This involves a combination of Criminal History, Referee and Background checks, face to face interviews and vigilance in observing their behaviour, attitudes and relationships with students.*

### Working with Children Checks

- All persons (staff and volunteers) who are in regular contact with children or who work in close proximity to children on a regular basis, or who supervise such persons, or who have access to children's records are required to present to the School a current Working with Children Check before commencing their duties and to keep currency, carried out at least every three years.
- This process is managed in accordance with the principles and procedures contained in *Child Safe Environments: Dealing with information obtained about the criminal history of employees and volunteers who work with children.*
- All teachers are required to have current registration with the Teachers' Registration Board of SA. A DCSI Criminal History Check is a compulsory component of the Teacher Registration and it is the teacher's responsibility to maintain the currency of their teacher registration (every 3 years) and provide the HR Manager with a copy of their certificate prior to the expiration date.

### Background and Referee Checks

- As a key part of the recruitment, as well as Working with Children Checks, referees are contacted and other necessary background checks undertaken to ensure the suitability of all



persons who are in regular contact with children or who work in close proximity to children on a regular basis, or who supervise such persons, or who have access to children's records

Face to face interviews

- Whenever possible a face to face interview with the Principal or Business Manager will be conducted prior to the appointment of any staff member.

#### **4. Expectations, Supervision, Codes of Conduct and Professional Boundaries for Staff and Volunteers**

*The College values all staff and volunteers. They are treated fairly and respectfully and are required to contribute to our students' safety and wellbeing in the following ways:*

- a. Provision of a safe, respectful and engaging environment where our students observe and are taught positive life skills and values. This helps our students to:
  - develop and expect positive relationships with others
  - feel connected to the school community and beyond
  - be resilient and resourceful in dealing with stress and adversity
  - achieve their potential as learners and member of our community.
- b. Be aware, vigilant and able to recognise when children and young people's wellbeing or safety is being compromised. They should be prepared to act and follow up on their concerns. This helps ensure:
  - timely and relevant information is gathered and shared with other relevant persons
  - unsuitable individuals are not present at or involved with the school
  - students and their families are directed to support when they first show signs of needing it
  - fewer children and young people are harmed by violence, harm or risk of harm.
- c. Understand that the needs of children and young people who have been harmed through violence, harm or risk of harm may require them to adapt their programs and support accordingly. They are to aim to help these children and young people stay connected to school and contribute to their recovery and their development of positive coping skills and learning success.
- d. Supervision of students  
Students are actively supervised by staff at the appropriate ratio for the age of the students, purpose, type and location of the activity. Supervision requirements for practical lessons, counselling, yard duty, camps, excursions, travel, etc. are documented in the relevant policies and procedures of which all staff are made aware and required to follow.
- e. Working One to One with Students  
At times it may be necessary for staff to work one to one alone with a student. Guidelines for these situations are outlined in the *Protective Practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people*. Three essential rules are:
  - make it public (open and visible space)
  - make it authorised (ensure you have your school leader's approval)
  - make it timely (consider the appropriateness of the time of day and length of time).
- f. Codes of Conduct

Clear, accessible and transparent codes of conduct which reflect the school values and specify standards of conduct and care, face to face and online behaviour and professional boundaries have been developed in consultation with the relevant persons and are reviewed every two years. Consequences for breaching codes of conduct are clearly outlined in each document. All community members are engaged with our Codes of Conduct which are available on our website and regularly promoted and revisited.

## **5. Support, train, supervise and enhance the performance**

*All volunteers and employees who work with children or their records have ongoing supervision, support and training such that their performance is developed and enhanced to promote the establishment and maintenance of a child safe environment.*

- a. Responding to Risks of Harm, Abuse and Neglect – Education and Care (RRHAN-EC Certificate) Training
  - All school staff must complete the full-day RRHAN-EC training and then the regular (every three years) update training (online). A current certificate must be provided to the Business Office prior to the commencement of duties or the expiration date.
  - All teachers are required to undertake the full-day RRHAN-EC training to obtain their registration with the Teachers' Registration Board of SA and undertake the update training to renew registration. A DCSI Criminal History Check is a compulsory component of the Teacher Registration process. It is the teacher's responsibility to maintain the currency of their teacher registration and provide the Business Manager with a copy of their certificate prior to the expiration date.
  - Volunteers can undertake an in-school face to face session (PowerPoint presentation and course handbook) facilitated by the Deputy Principal or their delegate at the beginning of each year and be provided with their certificate by the school. Alternatively, volunteers can choose to complete the online Education and Care Induction for Volunteers Module (20 minutes) and print their certificate upon completion. Volunteers must undertake the training before commencing their role.
  - Regular training and updates are provided to employees and volunteers in regard to: College policies, practices, Codes of Conduct, Protective Practices for staff and volunteers, legal obligations and mandatory notification.
- b. Staff Induction
  - All new staff undergo an induction process. The College's child protection principles, policies and procedures, as well as their role and responsibilities, form an integral component of the induction. It is essential that new staff not only develop a thorough understanding of the legislative, administrative, social and educational requirements to protect children but that they also engage with our proactive and positive child-safe ethos, culture and practices.

## **6. Report and respond appropriately to suspected harm or risk of harm**

- a. Reporting Procedure
  - All staff and volunteers are regularly reminded of their obligation to and how to make timely and accurate reports of suspected harm or risk of harm. It is an expectation of the school that any person who, in the course of their work or

volunteering, suspects on reasonable grounds that a child is being or has been harmed, or there is the risk of harm, must report their suspicion to the Child Abuse Report Line: CARL 131478. This includes even persons who are not mandated to report suspected child harm or risk of harm under the legislation.

- All teachers, staff and volunteers need to also inform the Principal of any mandatory notifications, to ensure that the Principal can take any appropriate action to support the child. If the notification concerns the Principal, then the Chair of the School Board would be informed not the Principal.
  - The School Mandatory Notification Procedure details the requirements and process to make a report and these must be followed precisely.
- b. Responding to Reports of Suspected Harm or Risk of Harm
- The College will act promptly and responsibly in dealing with any reports and allegations of harm or risk of harm.
    - All reports will be managed by the Principal and reported to the Chair of the College Board.
    - The care, safety and welfare of the student is the paramount consideration.
    - Where appropriate other external authorities will be notified e.g. SAPOL, Teachers' Registration Board, AISSA.
    - The Guidelines provided in the SA cross-sector document *Managing allegations of sexual misconduct in SA education and care settings (2013)* when required will be followed.
    - If the report involves a staff or community member, the Principal will also follow the guidelines in the *Critical Incident Procedure*.
- c. Responding to problem sexual behaviour involving children and young people
- The College will work in line with the Guidelines provided in the SA cross-sector document: *Responding to problem sexual behaviour involving children and young people: guideline for staff in education and care settings (2013)* in all circumstances where a child or young person is alleged to have engaged in problem sexual behaviour.
  - These Guidelines outline the responsibilities staff members have in these circumstances and recognise that procedures are significantly different from those involving allegations of sexual misconduct by adults. They reflect the different rights and needs of children and young people and the different legislation within which staff must operate.
- d. Record Keeping and Documentation
- Documentation of any incident and follow up actions, e.g. reports, records of interviews and meetings must be stored in a locked, confidential file.

## **7. Empower and promote the participation of children in developing and maintaining child safe environments**

- a. Curriculum
- The College-wide implementation of the *Keeping-Safe Child Protection Curriculum (KS:CPC)* enables a cohesive, consistent and clear approach to developing 4 key aspects:
- the right to be safe
  - relationships
  - recognising and reporting abuse



- protective strategies.

*The Keeping-Safe Child Protection Curriculum* is embedded in our teaching, learning and pastoral care across all year levels. It is a school expectation that all teaching staff undertake the full day KS:CPC training and then maintain currency through completing the online course every three years.

b. Pastoral Program

Our Pastoral Program is fully integrated throughout the teaching and learning and structural organisation to effectively meet the personal, social, wellbeing and academic needs of students. A greater understanding of themselves and others is nurtured; they develop resilience and gain confidence to manage and cope with the opportunities and challenges of real life. A focus on positive psychology and wellbeing empowers students to keep themselves and others safe.

c. Student Voice

We believe our students have unique perspectives on learning, teaching, and schooling, and we encourage them to actively shape their own education. Student voice allows students to engage, participate, lead and learn. We foster in our students a sense of social justice and develop their self-confidence and the skills to stand up for what they believe is just and fair.

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Cross sector Guidelines (SA)	Child Safe Environments: principles of good practice Protective Practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people Managing allegations of sexual misconduct in SA education and care settings Responding to problem sexual behaviour in children and young people Information Sharing Guidelines	
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