

## Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy

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### 1. Purpose

#### 1.1. Guiding Values:

In keeping children and young people safe, the following values are a mechanism for guiding our actions and assisting in decision-making; they are a reference to which workers can refer to ensure their responsibilities to children and young people are upheld:

- safeguarding children and young people is a shared responsibility; it is reliant on all individuals within our organisation to keep children and young people safe in our care;
- any form of abuse or neglect towards children and young people will not be tolerated, and immediate action will be taken upon the report of any suspected harmful or abusive behaviours;
- the best interest of the child will be the primary consideration in all actions and decisions concerning the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person;
- we are accountable to the children and young people we work with by fostering high ethical standards in a culture of openness and transparency;
- we empower children by informing them of their rights and responsibilities and support them to speak up about any matters of importance to them, including if something goes wrong;
- we work to include the participation of children and young people in decision-making regarding any services or other matters affecting them.

#### 1.2. Purpose:

CST has zero-tolerance towards the abuse and neglect of children and young people. We are committed to the rights of all children and young people to feel safe and be safe when participating in our organisation's activities, services and programs.

The purpose of this Policy is to outline the responsibilities, procedures and practices required by all workers within CST in relation to keeping children and young people free from abuse and neglect. This Policy supports our obligations under the *Reportable Conduct Scheme*, the *Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023*, the *Child Safe Standards* recommended by the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* and is aligned with the *Australian Human Rights Commission National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*.

As such, our policies and procedures reflect child-safe legislation and promote best practice and care for the children and young people within our organisation. Our Board approves and endorses the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.

We take our responsibility seriously to deliver a supportive, learning environment that is caring, nurturing and safe. We are committed to taking action in advancing the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and ensuring compliance with all requirements set out in this Policy.

## 2. **Scope**

- 2.1. The Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy applies to all workers, including employees, casual staff, Board and committee members, volunteers and contractors involved with CST.
- 2.2. This Policy applies in all our operational environments and without fail wherever children and young people are participating in our organisation's activities, programs, services or facilities.

## 3. **Policy**

### 3.1. **Definition of terms for the purpose of this Policy:**

- **Bullying** involves the inappropriate use of power by one or more persons over another less powerful person or group and is generally an act that is repeated over time. Bullying has been described by researchers as taking many forms which are often interrelated and include:
  - Verbal (name-calling, put-downs, threats)
  - Physical (hitting, punching, kicking, scratching, tripping, spitting)
  - Social (ignoring, excluding, ostracising, alienating)
  - Psychological (spreading rumours, stalking, dirty looks, hiding or damaging possessions)
- **Child or young person** is a person under the age of 18 years.
- **Code of Conduct** aims to identify and prevent behaviour that may be harmful to children and young people in our communities. The Code of Conduct outlines what is and what is not acceptable behaviour or practice when working with or engaging with children and young people.
- **Emotional or psychological abuse** occurs when a child does not receive the love, affection or attention they need for healthy emotional, psychological and social development. Such abuse may involve repeated rejection or threats to a child. Constant criticism, teasing, ignoring, threatening, yelling, scapegoating, ridicule and rejection, or continual coldness are all examples of emotional abuse. These behaviours continue to the extent that they result in significant damage to the child's physical, intellectual or emotional wellbeing and development.
- **Family Violence** occurs when children are forced to live with violence between adults in their home. It is harmful to children. It can include witnessing violence or the consequences of violence. Family violence is defined as violence between members of a family or extended family or those fulfilling the role of the family in a child or young person's life. Exposure to family violence places children and young people at increased risk of physical injury and harm and has a significant impact on their wellbeing and development.
- **Grooming** means befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child (and/or the child's guardian, family or friend or a worker) for the purpose of establishing trust to normalise sexually harmful behaviour or engage in an unlawful act, criminal offence or sexual misconduct against a child. Grooming occurs in a pattern of manipulative or controlling behaviours. These behaviours can take place in a range of settings.

Examples of grooming behaviour include:

- isolating a child from their peers to spend time alone
- befriending a child in person and continuing to communicate with the child online
- giving gifts, money or alcohol to a child, parent or friend to gain access to a child
- inappropriate touching of a child, including tickling and play fighting
- asking a child not to tell anyone about their behaviour.

For the purpose of:

- establishing trust to normalise sexually harmful behaviour or engage in an unlawful act, sexual offence or sexual misconduct against a child.

Grooming behaviour can also be a sexual offence under section 125D of the *Criminal Code Act 1924*.

If you are unsure if an allegation of grooming behaviour is a criminal offence, you should contact Tasmania Police.

- **National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (National Principles)** are designed to build capacity and deliver child safety and wellbeing in organisations, families and communities and prevent future harm. The Principles have been endorsed by all Commonwealth, State and Territory governments.  
[childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/national-principles](https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/national-principles)
- **Online environment** is anywhere online that allows digital communication, such as social networks, text messages and messaging apps, email and private messaging, online chats, comments on live streaming sites and voice chat in games.
- **Physical violence means:**
  - actual physical violence: the intentional or reckless application of physical force to a person without lawful justification or excuse; or
  - apprehended physical violence: any act which intentionally or recklessly causes a person to apprehend immediate and unlawful violence to the person.

Examples of actual physical violence include hitting, punching, pushing, kicking and spitting.

Examples of apprehending physical violence include words or actions which indicate that physical violence will occur to the child in the future.

- **Risk management** is in the context of creating safe environments for children and young people. Risk management consists of assessing and taking steps to minimise the risks of harm to children and young people because of the action of an employee, volunteer, contractor or another child or young person. Risk management includes planning the work of the organisation to reduce or minimise situations where children and young people may be abused.
- **Reportable conduct** includes a range of conduct committed against or in the presence of children, including criminal and non-criminal behaviour. Reportable conduct involves:
  - significant emotional or psychological harm
  - significant neglect
  - physical violence
  - a sexual offence
  - sexual misconduct
  - grooming
  - relevant offences such as failing to report child abuse and female genital mutilation.
- **Reportable Conduct Scheme** requires leaders of specific organisations to notify an independent regulator when concerns are raised about conduct related to child abuse involving a worker, and conduct investigations.

- **The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission)** is an independent inquiry established in 2013 by the Australian Government to examine and report upon responses by institutions to instances and allegations of child sexual abuse in educational institutions, religious groups, sporting organisations, state institutions and youth organisations. The findings provide recommendations to the Government on how to improve laws, policies, structures and practices to prevent such harm from re-occurring. [childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au](http://childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au)
- **Sexual misconduct** is conduct that may overlap with criminal conduct. When performed in a sexual manner or with a sexual intention, sexual misconduct includes:
  - inappropriate behaviour
  - physical contact
  - voyeurism (which means watching someone or others)
  - speech or other communication, including electronic communication.

Sexual misconduct is conduct that doesn't meet the acceptable standard of behaviour by a worker or volunteer and is committed in a sexual manner or with sexual intention. Sexual misconduct may occur in a variety of settings, including in person communication and online communication.

Examples of sexual misconduct include inappropriate comments to a child about an area of their body in a sexual manner and inappropriate touching of a child. Another example would be intentionally showing a sexually explicit movie to a child for sexual gratification.

- **Sexual offences include:**
  - bestiality (given this often co-occurs with sexual abuse of people)
  - penetrative sexual abuse of child or young person
  - person permitting penetrative sexual abuse of child or young person on premises
  - persistent sexual abuse of child or young person
  - indecent act with child or young person
  - procuring child or young person for sexual abuse
  - communications with intent to procure child or young person
  - penetrative sexual abuse of person with mental impairment
  - indecent assault
  - procuring a person for penetrative sexual abuse by threats or fraud
  - involving person under 18 years in production of child exploitation material
  - production of child exploitation material
  - distribution of child exploitation material
  - possession of child exploitation material
  - accessing child exploitation material
  - incest
  - indecency
  - rape
  - inciting or attempts to commit crimes that are inciting or attempts to
  - commit offences listed above
  - accessories after the fact for crimes that are inciting or attempts to
  - commit offences listed above
  - willfully and obscenely expose one's person in public.

- **Significant emotional or psychological harm:** Emotional or psychological harm means harm to a child's:
  - wellbeing
  - development
  - or both.

Significant means the harm is more than trivial. It is also important to know that something doesn't have to have a permanent impact or effect to be considered significant. Examples of significant emotional or psychological harm include:

- direct and indirect exposure to domestic and family violence
  - verbal abuse, such as telling a child they are worthless
  - humiliating a child in front of their peers.
- **Significant neglect:** Neglect of a child means the deliberate or reckless failure to meet one or more of that child's basic needs. Significant means the neglect is more than trivial or insignificant, but is not required to be deemed serious or to have a lasting permanent effect.  
There are several types of neglectful behaviour. These include:
    - supervisory neglect: for example, leaving a child in a hot car in summer time
    - physical neglect: a child being extremely dirty and suffering a skin condition as a result of poor hygiene
    - educational neglect: preventing a child from attending school for no valid reason
    - emotional neglect: rejecting a child from a family, home, school or other situation for no valid reason.
  - **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** is an international agreement setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities. [ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx](http://ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx)
  - **Worker** is a person over the age of 18 who is employed by an organisation, whether or not the person is employed in connection with any work or activities of the organisation that relate to children engaged by the organisation to provide services, including as a volunteer, contractor, subcontractor, consultant, director, member of a management committee, office holder, alderman, councillor, MP, student or trainee, and/or minister of religion or religious leaders. The Reportable Conduct Scheme covers all workers in an organisation –not only those that work or volunteer with children.

### 3.2. Responsibilities:

3.2.1. Safeguarding children and young people is a shared responsibility. It is the responsibility of all at CST, from executive to employees, volunteers and contractors, to:

- protect children and young people from all forms of abuse and neglect by workers;
- be alert to incidents of child abuse and neglect occurring outside the scope of our operations and services that may have an impact on the children and young people to whom we provide a service;
- create and maintain a child-safe culture that is understood, endorsed and put into action by all the individuals who work for, volunteer, support or access our programs and services.

3.2.2. We expect all within CST, regardless of their role or level of responsibility, to act to safeguard children and young people from such harm by:

- adopting appropriate safeguarding practice and behaviour set within our policy and procedural guidelines when carrying out their roles;
- reporting any abuse and neglect of which they become aware to management and/or to external authorities responsible for child protection or to the Police, regardless of whether that abuse is being perpetrated by workers within CST or by those outside the organisation, including those from the child's family, extended family, their family's extended network or strangers.

3.2.3. We expect all within CST to promote equity and respect diversity by:

- actively anticipating children and young people's diverse circumstances and responding effectively to those with additional vulnerabilities;
- informing children and young people of their rights and giving all children and young people access to information, support and complaints processes;
- respecting the rights of children and young people to participate in decision making, paying appropriate attention to diversity, inclusion and equitable access.

The responsibility of each role in relation to the development and compliance of this Policy is detailed in Section 3.5.

3.2.4. Safeguarding Governance:

CST has a safeguarding children and young people governance structure with robust systems in place which support workers and service users to report safeguarding concerns and facilitate effective risk-based and informed decisions that ensure accountability to children and young people.

Our governance structure, including a Safeguarding Children and Young People Committee, defines the roles and responsibilities associated with providing oversight, management and implementation of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people.

### 3.3. **Our Commitment:**

CST is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people who access our activities, programs, services or facilities. Our policies and procedures seek to address risks to child safety and to establish a safeguarding culture and practices.

Our safeguarding policies and procedures are:

- publicly accessible, online and in forms that are easy to understand;
- informed by stakeholder consultation;
- communicated to children, young people and their families, our workers, our partners and contractors and the general public.

To inform and review our safeguarding policies, we seek feedback from all our services users and providers. We gain endorsement and advise stakeholders of any changes.

3.3.1. We are committed to safeguarding children and young people:

Through this Policy, we document our clear commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. We communicate our commitment to all of our workers and ensure that the Policy is available in child-friendly versions that reflect the ages, developmental stage, diversity and abilities of the children and young people to whom we deliver services.

We have a zero-tolerance approach towards child abuse and neglect and take seriously any concerns or incidents raised.

Our approach to risk management recognises the potential risks to children and young people associated with CST's service delivery. It considers online and physical or psychological environments and any vulnerable or diverse circumstances of children or young people utilising our services.

3.3.2. Our workers know the behaviour we expect:

We ensure that each person involved in the delivery of our services understands their role and the behaviour we expect in relation to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. We utilise position descriptions that clearly state relevant responsibilities and safeguarding requirements.

CST requires all workers to acknowledge, in writing, their commitment and adherence to our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy. We have a Code of Conduct, which is approved and endorsed from the highest levels of our organisation that outlines our expectations for behaviour towards children and young people.

We monitor and supervise all workers, including contractors and partner organisations, for appropriate practice and behaviour in the delivery of our service to children and young people. Any failure to observe our behavioural guidelines is taken seriously, and we are committed to taking appropriate disciplinary and legal action wherever necessary.

3.3.3. We minimise the likelihood of recruiting a person who is unsuitable:

We have appropriate measures in place and require applicants to undergo extensive screening processes prior to appointment to minimise the likelihood that we, or an external recruitment agency or contractor, will recruit a person who is unsuitable to work/volunteer with children or young people. We have recruitment procedures that ensure:

Our safeguarding commitment is communicated to potential applicants for all positions;

- face-to-face interviews are held, which include safeguarding-related questions;
- two professional reference checks are undertaken, which include safeguarding-related questions;
- screening checks are undertaken, including identity, National, and where applicable, International criminal history checks, working with children checks and qualification checks.

We require our workers to disclose criminal convictions or charges affecting their suitability to work with children and young people both prior and subsequent to their employment, and we review police records and undertake Working with Children checks or equivalent periodically.

We ensure that there will be no discrimination as part of the recruitment process, with respect to inclusion and equal opportunity and, where possible, hire appropriate workers that represent the diverse range of children and young people and their families involved in our organisation.

3.3.4. Induction and training is part of our commitment:

We have an induction process ensuring all new workers are informed and supported to understand CST's safeguarding children and young people policies, procedures and practices. Our workers are provided with copies of CST's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, Code of Conduct and Responding to Child Abuse Reports and Allegations Policy and, where applicable, Recruitment Policy.

CST's induction process provides guidance relating to an individual's safeguarding responsibilities and offers opportunities to seek clarity in relation to the commitments and behavioural expectations set out in the policies.

We have a Training Plan that outlines how and when we support ongoing education for all our workers in relation to how keeping children and young people safe will be fulfilled. CST's plan includes training regarding children's rights, voices and participation, cultural safety and humility.

3.3.5. We encourage the involvement of children, young people and their families:

We have processes for seeking and incorporating input and feedback with children, young people and their families. We respect diversity and seek to facilitate effective communication and engagement.

We promote the participation and empowerment of young people and provide the opportunity for their voice and ideas to be heard and space to express their needs and concerns. We actively encourage children and young people to take part in the decision-making process, particularly on matters affecting them. We create opportunities for involvement and seek input and feedback to inform our policies, procedures and practices.

We involve children, young people, and their families in developing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment. We provide information to children, young people and their families (such as brochures, posters, handbooks, guidelines) about:

- our commitment and approach to upholding and safeguarding the rights of children and young people;
- the behaviour we expect of our workers;
- the behaviour we expect from the children, young people and their families who access our services;
- our policy and mechanism for reporting abuse or concerns.

3.3.6. Our workers understand their responsibility for reporting child abuse:

Our policy for reporting and responding to child abuse is approved and endorsed from the highest levels of our organisation and applies to all our workers. The Policy states that:

- workers must immediately report abuse or neglect and any concerns with policies, practices or the behaviour of workers;
- workers must meet any legislated mandatory reporting requirements;
- workers must follow a specified process when reporting abuse or neglect, including who will receive reports;
- failure to report is serious misconduct.

Workers are given a copy of and have access to the Policy and understand the implications of the Policy for their role. We document any allegation, disclosure or concern regarding child abuse and monitor responses to all allegations, disclosures or concerns.

3.3.7. We maintain and improve our policies and practices:

CST seeks to continuously review and improve our policies, procedures and practices to safeguard children and young people from abuse and neglect. The responsibility for implementing and reviewing our safeguarding children and young people approach is led by the Executive annually.



To identify any key improvements needed, CST incorporates findings from internal audits and reviews that assess our ongoing compliance with our responsibilities to keep children and young people safe, input and feedback received by children and young people and their families, feedback gained from communication with our workers and feedback gained from complaints and compliments received.

### 3.4. Roles and Responsibilities:

The responsibilities of each role in relation to the development and compliance of the CST Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy are detailed below:

#### 3.4.1. The Board:

- advocate and promote child rights, empowering and engaging children and young people in support of this Policy and its expectations;
- promote the commitment to this Policy and its expectations both internally and publicly;
- support policy review on a three-year cycle as a minimum or at a time governed by legislation, regulations, or organisational learnings that promote a change to the Policy and all relevant policy or procedural guidelines;
- ensure compliance with the Policy via an inbuilt mechanism for ongoing monitoring and review;
- ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow for the development, effective implementation, communication and continuous improvement of this Policy;
- develop opportunities for regular discussion and review at all levels to support a culture of openness and continuous improvement and accountability to keeping children and young people safe from abuse and neglect.

#### 3.4.2. CST Executive and Leadership:

- advocate and promote child rights, empowering and engaging children and young people in support of this Policy;
- ensure all workers understand their obligations in accordance with this Policy and any relevant policy and procedural documentation;
- ensure this Policy is implemented and adhered to amongst workers;
- ensure the development and implementation of required internal policy/procedures and guidelines are in place to support safeguarding children and young people practices in accordance with the expectations of this Policy;
- ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow effective implementation of this Policy;
- ensure to fully support workers with any decision to initiate action to protect a child from abuse and neglect;
- ensure appropriate supports, such as counselling and formal debriefing, are provided for any workers involved in a matter relating to responding to a concern for the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person;
- proactively share resources and experience in the development of child-safe initiatives as they are identified;
- develop opportunities for regular discussion and review at all levels to support a culture of continuous improvement and accountability of keeping children and young people safe from abuse and neglect;
- ensure that all workers are aware of the appropriate recruitment, screening and employment practice in relation to safeguarding children and young people;

- review and update this Policy and supporting resources in consultation with relevant stakeholders;
- support the coordination of the Safeguarding Children and Young People framework and its implementation;
- evaluate and analyse complaints, concerns and safety incidents relating to this Policy;
- provide training and advice in the application of this Policy.

#### 3.4.3. Workers (Employees / Volunteers / Contractors):

- advocate and promote child rights, empowering and engaging children and young people in support of this Policy;
- maintain a full understanding of the commitments and expectations of this Policy, as well as all other policies relevant to safeguarding children and young people;
- ensure compliance with this Policy, fully implementing and adhering to the commitments and expectations;
- to undertake any induction and training anticipated in this Policy in relation to policy and procedures relevant to safeguarding children and young people;
- to support a culture of openness, continued improvement and accountability to children and young people by engaging in regular review and discussion of organisational policies and practices and providing feedback to support improvement;
- to seek guidance from a supervisor or manager if there is ever any lack of understanding in relation to the commitments and expectations as set out in this Policy;
- to adopt appropriate safeguarding practice and behaviour;
- to take action to protect children and young people from all forms of abuse and neglect;
- to report any abuse committed by workers within CST or by others;
- To assist in creating and maintaining a child-safe culture and a culture of inclusion and safety.

#### **4. References and Additional Related Documents**

4.1. The following CST policies must be considered in relation to this document:

- CST Staff Code of Conduct
- Responding to Child Abuse and Allegations Policy
- Staff Recruitment, Induction and Probation Policy
- Work Health and Safety Policy
- Volunteer Policy
- Safeguarding Children and Young People Information for Parents and Care Givers
- Safeguarding Children and Young People Commitment Statement
- Safeguarding and Children and Young People Governance Structure

4.2. Related Frameworks and Legislation:

Our guidelines comply with relevant legislation.

In upholding this Policy, the following legislation and frameworks must be considered by all CST personnel:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
- Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023.
- Reportable Conduct Scheme
- Child and Youthsafe Organisations Framework
- Child and Youthsafe Standards
- National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020
- Australian Human Rights Commission National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- Code of Professional Ethics for the Teaching Profession in Tasmania
- Professional Boundaries: Guidelines for Tasmanian Teachers

4.3. Definition Reference and Sources:

- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), 2018
- World Health Organization, (2006)
- Child Family Community Australia (CFCA), (2016)
- Australian eSafety Commissioner, (2020)

## GENERAL DEFINITION OF TERMS:

Where referred to in this document:

**Christian Schools Tasmania (CST)** means an association of Christians who, through their Board of Directors, are legally responsible for Calvin Christian School, Channel Christian School, Emmanuel Christian School and Northern Christian School.

**The School** refers to the CST school to whom the Policy applies.

**The Board** means the Board of Directors of Christian Schools Tasmania.

**Executive** is a forum including the Chief Executive Officer, Principals and the Business Manager.

**Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** is the person appointed to the position of Chief Executive Officer of the Association, or a person acting from time to time in that position.

**Principal** means the person charged with responsibility for the operation of an Association school, or a person acting from time to time in that position.

**Compliance Manager** is the person appointed to the position of Compliance Manager of the Association, or a person acting from time to time in that position.

**Business Manager** is the person appointed to the position of Business Manager of the Association, or a person acting from time to time in that position.

**Manager** means a person appointed to a managerial position within CST.

**Staff** is any person either employed by CST either on a casual, part-time or permanent basis as well as volunteers, contractors and sub-contractors engaged in working at a CST School.

**Parent** is a person who is the legal guardian of a child enrolled at a CST school.

**Child** means any student enrolled at a CST school.