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## CHILD SAFETY POLICY

### STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

#### (Child Safe Standard 2)

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

Gladstone Park Secondary College has zero tolerance for child abuse.

### PRINCIPLE OF INCLUSION

Gladstone Park Secondary College is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

Every person involved in Gladstone Park Secondary College has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

In its planning, decision-making and operations Gladstone Park will:

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

### CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

#### (Child Safe Standard 3)

Gladstone Park Secondary College is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development.

This Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations. It is intended to

complement child protection legislation, Department policy, school policies and procedures and professional standards, codes or ethics as these apply to staff and other personnel.

The Principal and school leaders of Gladstone Park Secondary College will support implementation and monitoring of the Code of Conduct, and will plan, implement and monitor arrangements to provide inclusive, safe and orderly schools and other learning environments. The Principal and school leaders of Gladstone Park Secondary College will also provide information and support to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively.

All staff, contractors, volunteers and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work are required to comply with the Code of Conduct by observing expectations for appropriate behaviour below. The Code of Conduct applies in all school situations, including school camps and in the use of digital technology and social media.

### **Acceptable Behaviours**

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work individually, we are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- upholding the school's statement of commitment to child safety and adhering to the school's child safe policy at all times and
- treating students and families in the school community with respect both within the school environment and outside the school environment as part of normal social and community activities.
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability
- reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the school's leadership or child safety officer
- understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse.
- if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.

### **Unacceptable Behaviours**

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work we must not:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse, develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, offering gifts)
- exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as abusive and not justified by the educational, therapeutic, or service delivery context

- ignore behaviours by other adults towards students when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate
- discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental guidance, delivering the education curriculum or a therapeutic setting
- treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity.
- communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to school work or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter
- photograph or video a child in a school environment except in accordance with school policy or where required for duty of care purposes
- in the school environment or at other school events where students are present, consume alcohol contrary to school policy or take illicit drugs under any circumstances.

### 1. Rationale:

All children have a right to feel safe and to be safe. **For the purposes of this policy, the definition of a child includes any person under the age of 17 years, or in the case of where a protection order is in force, under the age of 18 years.** All professionals working with children and/or families share the responsibility of protecting children.

Staff members at Gladstone Park Secondary College have a legal and moral responsibility to respond to incidents involving the abuse of children with whom they have contact. They are to use professional judgement of available information and must report to Child Protection, Department of Health and Human Services all allegations or disclosures of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. They must also report to Child Protection when a belief is formed that a child has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed.

### 2. Purpose:

To ensure that the safety and wellbeing of children are maintained by putting the needs of children first and that each child is protected against significant harm from abuse. Schools have a key responsibility in the prevention and reporting of child abuse and neglect. This policy seeks to reflect the need to make mandatory reporting reports and referrals under the Child, Youth and Families Act (2005).

### 3. Guidelines:

All Teachers registered to teach or who have permission to teach pursuant to the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic), Principals and Nurses are mandated by law to report their belief on reasonable grounds of physical and/or sexual abuse to Department of Human Services Child Protection.

- Clear processes and protocols around responding to child abuse will be shared amongst all staff.
- Those persons not mandated may report any disclosures or concerns about children's safety to the Principal, the appropriate Sub-school Principal or Student Welfare Coordinator.

- Staff to whom the disclosure is made is encouraged to make the report with support from the Principal, a Sub-school Principal or Student Welfare Coordinator. The College will provide time for this process to be followed.
- New staff, including student teachers, will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of their induction procedure.
- Teaching Staff will be trained on mandatory responsibilities annually.
- All concerns should be reported immediately to the Principal, or in his/her absence a Sub-school Principal or Student Welfare Coordinator. Staff are also able to consult further with Regional staff on 9488 9488.
- The Sub-school will keep a record of all discussions about a student with whom there is a concern.
- If a belief has been formed by a staff member that sexual or physical abuse has taken place, the member of staff and/or the principal class officer or Student Welfare Coordinator will contact the Department of Human Services Child Protection by telephone as soon as possible to make an official notification on 1300664977 or after hours to the Child Protection Emergency Services on 131278. (Once a mandatory report has been made, the Education Department, Emergency Management Unit should be notified immediately on 9589 6266).
- Members of the Department of Human Services, or associated support or intervention services that visit the College following a notification, will interview staff and children only in the presence of the Principal or his/her nominee.
- All reports, information gathered is to be recorded and remain strictly confidential and disposed according to regulations.
- All incidents will continue to be monitored and any subsequent signs and indications of abuse are also to be reported.
- Full cooperation will be provided to the Department of Human Services, Child Protection and Police. This will be facilitated by the Principal.
- Staff members and students who are involved in the notification report will be supported by the Education Department's Critical Incident Unit.
- Where appropriate, the College will provide support to families.
- While only mandated by law to report incidents of physical and sexual abuse, teachers are also encouraged to report incidents of emotional and psychological harm or neglect.
- The school considers the moral obligation for reporting the belief on reasonable grounds of physical and/or sexual abuse to extend also to children over the age of 17. In such cases where Child Protection does not take reports, reports will be made directly to Victoria Police. The closest Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT) is Fawkner, 9355 6100. The school will offer supports in terms of counselling and referrals to all students regardless of age.

#### **4. Evaluation:**

This policy and its included Code of Conduct will be reviewed every two years and in the interim if legislative or other changes require.

## 5. References:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/chilsafestandards.aspx>

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/chilsafestandards.aspx>

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/default.aspx>

Ministerial Order 870

<http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/Pages/default.html>

**This policy was adopted at School Council on 19.12.2006**

**Amended at Council 20.3.2007 to include protocols for young persons 17 years or older.**

**Amended at Council 18.2.2014. Reviewed and updated. And reference to young persons 17 years or older incorporated into policy and separate protocols removed.**

**This policy, amended and renamed (previously Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Policy) and its included Child Safety Code of Conduct was endorsed at School Council on 13 September 2016**

**Amended to make separate and distinct Mandatory Reporting Policy at School Council on 15/11/2016.**

**Amended at Council December 2018**

**Amended and presented at School Council March 2020**

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