



Child Safety Policy 2020 – 2022

1 Purpose of this policy

- 1.1 Gisborne Montessori School (GMS) aims to provide a welcoming, supportive, and emotionally and physically secure learning and working environment for every member of the school community. It is not acceptable for any community member to experience bullying within the environment of the school.
- 1.2 GMS recognises and values the diversity of culture, beliefs, practices, customs, physical and intellectual abilities, and life experience of the whole school community.
- 1.3 This policy is an overarching document that forms the foundation of Gisborne Montessori School's (GMS) commitment, procedures, practices, decision-making, and culture with respect to child safety.

The GMS Child Safe policy is communicated on our public website, community newsletters and distributed and discussed at staff meetings and provided on induction to all our Board Members, staff, contractors, and volunteers.

2 Child Safe Principles

The School's commitment to child safety is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of work systems, practices, policies, and procedures to protect children from abuse.

- All children have the right to be safe.
- The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount
- The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected.
- Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Protection and Working With Children Policies and our Code of Conduct.
- The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.
- Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within the school community.
- Procedures are in place to screen all staff, Direct Contact Volunteers, third party contractors, and external education providers who have direct contact with children.
- Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
- Child protection training is mandatory for all directors of the School Board, staff, and Direct Contact Volunteers.

- Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the school community.
- Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.
- Young and vulnerable children have the right to special care and support.
- GMS has a zero tolerance of child abuse and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously and consistently.

3 Relevant Policies and Documentation

Gisborne Montessori School has the following documentation to support the school's Child Protection Program:

- 3.1 Child Safety Policy
- 3.2 Child Safe Code of Conduct for student, parents, staff and volunteers
- 3.3 Commitment to Child Safety
- 3.4 Staff Recruitment and Induction Policy
- 3.5 Cybersafety Policy
- 3.6 Social Media Policy
- 3.7 Mandatory Reporting Policy
- 3.8 Reporting Child Abuse Form (PROTECT Responding to suspected child abuse)
- 3.9 Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy
- 3.10 Working with Children Policy
- 3.11 Child Safety Risk Register

4 Standard 1 – Roles and Responsibilities

Child protection is everyone's responsibility. At Gisborne Montessori School (GMS), Board Members, staff and volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children.

The Principal and the Board Responsibilities

- 4.1 Developing strategies to embed a culture of student safety at GMS.
- 4.2 Allocating roles and responsibilities for achieving the strategies.
- 4.3 Inform the school community and staff about the strategies and allocated roles and responsibilities.
- 4.4 Put strategies into practice and inform the GMS community and staff about these practices.
- 4.5 Periodically review the effectiveness of the strategies put into practice and, if considered appropriate, revise those strategies.

These strategies give the highest priority to the promotion and protection of students' safety, health, development, education and wellbeing. This is achieved through:

- 4.6 Overseeing development and implementation of key policies and processes.
- 4.7 Ensuring student safety is a regular agenda item at Board meetings.
- 4.8 Having the Principal and other responsible staff report regularly to the Board on student safety matters.

- 4.9 Consideration by the Principal, responsible staff members and the Board, of areas for improvement.
- 4.10 The GMS Reporting Child Abuse Procedures indicate who has responsibilities in relation to the promotion of student safety and for receiving and making reports of suspicion of student abuse.
- 4.11 Create an environment supportive of children with a disability, are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background or those that are considered vulnerable.

Child Safe Officer Responsibilities

- 4.12 Dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse.
- 4.13 Ensuring that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, school policies and procedures and the school's Child Safety Policy and Child Safe Code of Conduct.
- 4.14 Ensuring that all adults within the school community are aware of their obligation to report sexual abuse of a child.
- 4.15 Ensuring that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are aware of their obligations to observe the Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- 4.16 Provide support for staff contractors and volunteers in undertaking their child protection responsibilities.

Staff Members' Responsibilities

- 4.17 All staff (including teaching, non-teaching, sporting coaches, music teachers and Casual relief teachers) are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy and the Child Safety Code of Conduct and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with the Principal or Child Safety Officer.
- 4.17 Where the concern relates to the Principal, then the concern must be raised with the School Board.

5 Standards 2 & 3 – Commitment to Child Safety & Code of Conduct

- 5.1 The Gisborne Montessori School outlines a commitment by the school to ensure that all staff, external providers and volunteers observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour. It covers the areas of professional boundaries, ethical behaviour and acceptable and unacceptable relationships.
- 5.2 The Principal and school leaders of Gisborne Montessori School will support implementation and monitoring of the Code of Conduct, and will plan, implement and monitor arrangements to provide an inclusive, safe and orderly school. The Principal and school leaders of Gisborne Montessori School will provide information and support to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively.
- 5.3 As a part of the School induction process, all Board Members, staff and volunteers are required to complete training modules on the content of our Child Protection Program and additional on-going training at least annually.

- 5.4 Staff, external education providers, contractors and volunteers are supported by the School's Child Safety Officer to ensure that they are compliant with the School's approach to child protection.
- 5.5 Gisborne Montessori School (GMS) is committed to the effective implementation of our Child Protection Program and ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated. We 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 School's activities, physical and online environments and the characteristics of the student body.
- 5.6 The GMS Child Protection Program relates to all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes work systems, practices, policies, and procedures to protect children from abuse. It includes:
- Clear procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse
 - Strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, students, parents and carers external education providers, contractors and volunteers to understand, identify discuss and report child protection matters
 - Procedures for recruiting and screening Board Members, staff and long-term contractors and volunteers.
 - Pastoral care strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe.
 - Policies with respect to cultural diversity and students with disabilities.
 - A child protection-training program.
 - Information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children.
 - Guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality.
 - Policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards including the Victorian Child Safe Standards, Ministerial Order 870 and Ministerial Order 70

6 Standard 4 – Recruitment and Personnel

- 6.1 Gisborne Montessori School (GMS) has recruitment practices that enable the Principal and the Board to be satisfied that people engaged in child-connected work for the School will perform appropriately in relation to student safety.
- 6.2 Each role at the School that involves child-connected work has a clear statement, which includes a clear role description, duties and responsibilities regarding student safety and relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to student safety.
- 6.3 References are checked and referees will be asked if there are any concerns in relation to Child Safety standards.
- 6.4 New staff, volunteers and contractors are inducted into the School's policies, codes, practices and procedures, governing student safety and child-connected work.
- 6.5 The school utilises the probationary period which is documented in all employee contracts.
- 6.6 All employees engaged by the GMS, as classroom teachers must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching, which includes a Police Criminal Records Check. Teachers must provide evidence of such registration before they commence employment, and are informed of GSM's Child Safe Policy and its student Safety Code of Conduct within their Letter of Appointment/Contract.

- 6.7 All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this check. (See *Working with Children Act 2005; Section 27*). Working with Children Check details are held within the school's PassTab system and the status is checked against a national database.
- 6.8 Any offer of employment is conditional upon the successful applicant submitting a statutory declaration that confirms:
- He/she does not have any convictions, findings of guilt, whether with or without conviction, or any charges pending or matters still outstanding against him/her (excepting traffic matters) in Australia or overseas.
 - He/she has not had any formal disciplinary action taken against him/her, or any finding, in relation to improper or unprofessional conduct in any previous employment.
 - He/she has not been dismissed, retired or resigned from any previous employment or volunteer role for reasons or allegations that he/she was involved in conduct of a sexual nature with a student or child
- 6.9 GMS has a dedicated Child Safety Officer who has undertaken extensive child safe professional learning and is the first point of call regarding any allegations of child abuse.
- 6.10 All new staff are sent the Child Safety Policy and are required to complete online training annually on mandatory reporting. Completion and records of training are held within the school's data management system (SAS). The mandatory reporting course is accessed through the Department of Education on the following link:

<http://www.elearn.com.au/det/protectingchildren/external/>

6.11 **Direct Contact Volunteers**

Direct Contact Volunteers are those volunteers who are involved in providing support, guidance and supervision directly to students and could potentially have direct unsupervised contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service.

Examples of Direct Contact Volunteer activities may include volunteers involved in assisting in learning activities, library, gardening or classroom assistant. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of the key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with the Child Safe Officer.

All Direct Contact Volunteers must have a WWCC and read the Child Safety Code of Conduct. Confirmation that it has been read must be provided. All DCV must sign in and out using PassTab which is located in school office.

6.12 **Indirect Contact Volunteers**

Indirect Contact Volunteers are those volunteers who are involved in providing support and services whilst not directly assisting a specific group of students. Indirect contact volunteers are not responsible for supervising students and would

not have 'unsupervised' contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service.

Examples of Indirect Contact Volunteer activities may include assisting with school functions, the dining hall, working bees, maintenance, animal care and fundraising activities.

All indirect volunteers are required by the School to be familiar with the Child Safety Code of Conduct. Confirmation that it has been read must be provided.

6.13 Third Party Contractors

All third-party contractors engaged by the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment.

All contractors engaged by the school are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the school environment. Contractors include, for example, outsourced maintenance and building services, consultants, Department of Justice workers and school cleaners. The person/company responsible for the contractors engaged by the school are required by the School to carry a WWCC.

All service providers engaged by the School are required by the School to be familiar with the College Child Protection, Child Safety and Working with Children Policies, our Code of Conduct.

The School will also include this requirement in the written agreement between the school and the third-party contractors.

6.14 External Education Providers

An external education provider is any organisation that GMS has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the School. The delivery of such a course may take place on School premises or elsewhere.

All external education providers engaged by the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment. All external education providers must have a WWCC and read the Child Safety Policy.

All external education providers engaged by the School are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy, and the GMS Child Safety Code of Conduct.

GMS will include this requirement in the written agreement between the school and the external education provider.

7 Standard 5 – Reporting Allegations

7.1 Ministerial Order 870, signed on 22/12/2015 makes it mandatory for schools and other organisations involved with children to actively comply with seven standards outlined in the order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students particularly with regard to abuse, sexual and otherwise.

7.2 Gisborne Montessori School (GMS) takes all allegations of abuse seriously and has resources in place to investigate them thoroughly and in a timely manner. Staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with any allegations of abuse.

- 7.3 GMS will work with all students, families, staff, board members, contractors and volunteers to know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse, are a victim of abuse, or if they notice inappropriate behaviour. Our Child Protection Program provides detailed guidance for members of the Board, staff and volunteers as to how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to our nominated Child Safety Officer. It also provides detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities. (See Mandatory Reporting Policy, Reporting Child Abuse Procedures and Appendix A – Reporting Child Abuse Form).
- 7.4 Staff, students, parents and carers, external education providers, contractors, volunteers or other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse are asked to contact the Principal or Child safety Officer.
- 7.5 The Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) (CYFA) (section 184) requires Mandatory Reporters to make a report to Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection when they believe that a child (aged under 17) is in need of protection from significant harm from physical injury or sexual abuse.
- 7.6 The principal will initially notify the Commission for Child and Youth Protection (CCYP) of a reportable allegation within three business days and update the Commission of progress within 30 calendar days. The principal must also investigate the reportable allegation and provide the findings of the investigation to the Commission.

7.7 Who are Mandatory Reporters?

Mandatory reporters are defined by the CYFA and include:

- Teachers
- The Principal
- Nurses
- School Counsellors
- Persons in religious ministry and
- Medical practitioners

- 7.8 A Mandatory Reporter must make a report even if the Child Safety Officer does not share their belief that a report must be made.
- 7.9 All communications will be treated confidentially on a need-to-know basis.

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger please call 000 without delay. It is an offence to fail to notify and update the Commission about reportable allegations.

7.10 Voluntary Reporting

In addition to the mandatory reporting obligations above, any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from child abuse, may disclose that information to the Police or the DHHS.

A child is to be considered to be “in need of protection” if:

- The child has been abandoned and there is no other suitable person who is willing and able to care for the child.
- The child’s parents are dead or incapacitated and there is no other suitable person who is willing and able to care for the child.
- The child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical injury and the parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.
- The child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of emotional or psychological harm and the parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.
- The child’s physical development or health has been, or is likely to be significantly harmed and the parents are unable or unwilling to provide basic care, or effective medical or other remedial care.

7.11 **Support for Affected Students**

Ensuring a student feels safe and supported following an incident is of critical importance to our School. Gisborne Montessori School will work closely with the student, parents and carers, and our wellbeing team to provide all additional support services that are available. Each matter will be a case-by-case basis an individual may be supported with:

- Referral to external specialist agencies.
- Family counselling.
- Academic support.

8 **Standard 6 – Reducing or Removing Risks of Abuse**

8.1 GMS has policies and practices in place for the early identification and response to incidents of abuse in its physical or online environment.

These policies and practices:

- Promote understanding by all Gisborne Montessori staff of GMS expectations in relation to behaviour and conduct when interacting with student and the consequences of failing to abide by those expectations.
- Seek to achieve ongoing risk assessment to identify and mitigate risk in all School environments, taking into account the age and needs of the students, the nature of the activities undertaken at GMS and the particular risks they might present.

8.2 Gisborne Montessori School believes it has a structured identification and reduction approach to Child Safety. This includes appointing a Child Safety Officer, training the Board and the GMS staff and monitoring and reviewing all practices and policies around Child Safety.

8.3 Areas of risk that Child Safe standards apply to are:

School Environments

- Recruitment and employment
- Monitoring on and off campus
- Classroom and learning environments
- Specialist facilities such as libraries, dining hall, animal enclosures, wetlands, art, music and maintenance areas
- Staff workplaces and offices
- Excursions and camp facilities/providers
- Visitors to the School

Online environments

- Email
- Social Media (FaceBook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, SnapChat etc)
- YouTube
- Mobile phones
- Other electronic media
- Remote learning platforms, for example, Microsoft TEAMS

Relationships and interactions with students and the following personnel

- Registered teachers and education support staff
- Other students
- Administration and school support staff
- Parents and carers
- Contractors
- Direct Volunteers
- Third Party Contractors
- Maintenance staff
- Visitors to the school

8.4 Gisborne Montessori School has a Risk Register that sets out clearly the following:

- Documents the risks relevant to the Child Safety Standards
- Takes into account the diversity of students at GMS to whom the risk may apply
- Lists mitigating actions that increase the effort required to abuse; increase the likelihood of detection; remove as far as possible triggers for inappropriate and/or abusive behavior
- Reduce the permissibility of inappropriate behavior
- GMS ensures that personnel associated with the School understand the School's expectation related to Child Safety standards and the School's general expectations regarding student welfare.

9 Standard 7 – Promoting Student Empowerment and Participation

- 9.1 Gisborne Montessori School will utilise its curricular, pastoral and co-curricular programmes to enhance student awareness, teaching students about child safety and child abuse and encourage them to disclose behaviour that makes them feel unsafe.
- 9.2 GMS aims to have simple and accessible processes that help children understand what to do if they want to report abuse, inappropriate behaviour or have concerns for their safety.

10 Gisborne Montessori School Community Communication

Gisborne Montessori School is proactive in the area of prevention and will communicate the school's child safety practices and its child safety code of conduct in the manner below:

Students	Parents/the College community	Employees, Volunteers, Contractors, Board Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Website ● School gatherings and community events ● Class Programs ● Conditions of enrolment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conditions of enrolment ● Website ● Parent information evenings ● School newsletters ● Handbook ● Excursion forms ● Skool Bag communication application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Website ● Letters of appointment/ contracts ● Induction training and refresher training ● Annual training session ● Staff meetings ● Board meetings ● Emails as required

10 Review and Compliance

- 10.1 This Policy must be complied with at all times. Failure to comply with this Policy may lead to disciplinary action including termination of employment or engagement. Serious cases may result in legal proceedings or referral to appropriate authorities.
- 10.2 The policy will be reviewed every two years and following any significant incidents if or when they occur.

DETAILS

CREATED	April 2014
REVIEWED	September 2020
MAINTAINED	Gisborne Montessori School Board
RATIFIED	
NEXT REVIEW	2022