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## CHILD SAFE POLICY

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APPROVED: February 2023  
REVIEWED DATE: 2024

### **VISION**

*(who and where we aspire to be)*

A hope filled Christian community pioneering personalised real-world education

### **MISSION**

*(what we do)*

Christ-centred K-12 education that inspires, nurtures and equips students to connect learning to life

### **VALUES**

*(What's important to us)*

Christian to the core we lead with Innovation, commit to Personalise Learning, embrace Partnerships and seek to Serve

### **STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY**

Leighland Christian School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. Child safety remains a primary focus of our ongoing care and decision making for all students, ensuring zero tolerance for child abuse and/or neglect. Our culture of safety is formed from a collective and continuous commitment to best practice, up to date policies and procedures and dedicated staff training to actively champion a child safe culture.

Leighland Christian School is committed to ensuring all students are safe and feel safe, with opportunities for their voices to be heard and considered, including Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with disabilities. As a school we strive to give students a voice and to ensure that they know who to talk to when support is needed, or a situation or incident is to be investigated. We endeavour to build a culture where students are heard and supported.

We see our commitment as flowing naturally from our vision and mission to operate according to Biblical, Christian principles for being in community and recognising the unique value and potential of every person, regardless of race, age, gender, ability and disability.

### **LEGISLATION**

- Three separate duty obligations for a teacher to report –
  - Australian government legislation – those who work regularly with children need to report suspected abuse or neglect with the goal to enable early intervention to protect the child from harm and to provide assistance and support to the child and their family
  - Common law – as teachers, we have a duty of care to protect children from all harm, including if the harm is occurring or is likely to occur outside the school grounds

- o School policy – our policy states that you are obliged to do so, and that is the reason for this presentation now.

*Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997 (Tas) (Austl.).*

- An adult who knows, or believes or suspects on reasonable grounds, that a child is suffering, has suffered or is likely to suffer abuse or neglect has a responsibility to take steps to prevent the occurrence or further occurrence of the abuse or neglect.
- If a prescribed person, in carrying out official duties or in the course of his or her work (whether paid or voluntary), believes, or suspects, on reasonable grounds, or knows that a child is being abused, then they must make a mandatory report.

## KEY TERMS

### Abuse and Harm

Abuse, in relation to a child, is intended to have its broadest meaning and includes:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse or other exploitation of a child, including child grooming
- emotional/psychological and verbal abuse
- neglect of the child
- exposure to violence, including family and domestic violence.
- Emotional harm or abuse - inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts towards a child and/or failure over time to provide them with adequate non-physical nurturing and emotional availability. Such acts of commission or omission are likely to damage a child's self-esteem or social competence.
- Physical harm or abuse - The intentional use of physical force against a child or young person that results in – or has a high likelihood of resulting in – harm for the child or young person's health, survival, development or dignity. This includes hitting, beating, kicking, shaking, biting, strangling, scalding, burning, poisoning and suffocating.
- Sexual harm or abuse - he involvement of a child or young person in sexual activity that they do not fully comprehend, are unable to give informed consent to, or for which they are not developmentally prepared, or else that violates the laws or social taboos of society. Children and young people can be sexually abused by both adults and other children or young people who are in a position of responsibility, trust or power over the victim.

### Caregiver

Any related or non-related person who has the responsibility for the protection, care, or custody of a dependent child or young person as a result of assuming the responsibility voluntarily, by contract, through employment, or by order of the court.

### Child

Any person under 18 years of age

### Child Abuse

All forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to a child or young person's health, survival, development, or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power.

### Child Protection

Is defined as the measures and structures to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence affecting children. Child protection means safeguarding children from harm. Harm includes

violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. The Strong Families, Safe Kids advice and referral line is the first point of contact for child wellbeing and safety. Contact them by phone on 1800 000 123 or via an [online contact form](#).

### **Complaint**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, by word or in writing. It must come from a person directly affected by the action, decision or service.

### **Concern**

A concern is something you would like to bring to the attention of the school that may not need follow up.

### **Consent**

Consent is an individual's free agreement to participate in an activity. Consent can only be given if it is free and voluntary, without fear, coercion, intimidation or anything else that inhibits free agreement (Australian Law Reform Commission, 2010; Powell, 2010).

### **Duty of Care**

Refers to your responsibility to adequately protect children in your care from harm.

### **Gender**

A person's sense of whether they are a man, woman, non-binary, agender, genderqueer, genderfluid, or a combination of one or more of these definitions. Gender can be binary (either a man or a woman), or non-binary (including people who have no binary gender at all and people who have some relationship to binary gender/s).

### **Grooming**

Actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child or young person, to lower the child or young person's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child or young person.

### **Mandatory Reporting**

Mandatory reporting is when the law requires a person to report known or suspected cases of abuse and neglect. The laws around who is required to report and in what circumstances are different in each state and territory. In Tasmania, all staff working within a school are considered mandatory reporters. Phone the Strong Families Safe Kids Advice and Referral line on 1800 000 123.

### **Neglect**

Isolated incidents or a pattern of failure over time to provide for the development and wellbeing of the child or young person in one or more of the following areas: • health • education • emotional development • nutrition • shelter and safe living conditions.

### **Stakeholders**

People who use your service or engage with your organisation including children, young people, parents and families, as well as community members and representatives of relevant government or industry bodies.

### **Vulnerable People**

Any person who is or may be unable to take care of themselves or is unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason.

### **WWVP**

The Working with Vulnerable People Registration is an ongoing assessment of a person's eligibility to work with vulnerable persons and involves a check of a person's national criminal history and other disciplinary

and police information. Volunteers and staff over 16 years of age who work with vulnerable children and adults, including people with National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) endorsement, are required to obtain and produce a Working with Vulnerable People card.

### **BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS AND THREADS**

CEN Biblical Threads inform and guide our practices and procedures within the school setting, ensuring our responses are built on a Biblical foundation. These include, but are not limited to, the following threads:

LOVING GOD	Students respond to God’s love by loving God in return and their neighbour as themselves.
BUILDING COMMUNITY	Students are active contributors and encouragers of others as the s built up.
CELEBRATING LIFE	Students embrace the full suite of God's provisions in life and live in such a way that all may flourish.
EMBRACING DIVERSITY	Students respect and celebrate the built-in differences between cultures and peoples given for the enhancement of all.
EXPRESSING WORDS	Students use words to build up, make choices and express life.
OVERCOMING SETBACKS	Students overcome setbacks through the strength of the Spirit and live in hope and faith.
SEEKING JUSTICE	Students act as agents of change by identifying and responding to injustice.
SHAPING CULTURE	Students understand their cultural context, discern its errors and its virtues, and seek to ‘shake and shape’ it for the Kingdom.

### **RESPONDING TO SUSPECTED HARM, ABUSE OR A COMPLAINT**

Any disclosure or suspicions of harm and abuse must be reported. Failing to report child abuse (including historical cases) may constitute a criminal offence under the “*Criminal Code Act 1924*”. All Leighland employees and volunteers are mandatory reporters.

When an allegation or complaint is made, the response will follow the relevant flowchart found in the appendix:

- Complaint made against Campus Principal, Executive Principal or Board Member (Appendix C)
- Complaint made by Primary Student, Parent or Guardian (Appendix D)
- Complaint made by High School student, Parent or Guardian (Appendix E)

### **CHILD SAFE PRINCIPLES AND HOW THEY ARE APPLIED IN THE SCHOOL CONTEXT**

#### **1. Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture.**

The Child Safe Standards are foundational to staffing policies including Staff Code of Conduct, Child Safety and Mandatory Reporting, Staff Handbook and Behaviour Management policies. Scenarios and staff training sessions are embedded in professional development over the course of the school year, helping to drive a culture of change and improvement. School leadership & Child Safe Officers attend training to receive critical updates on best practice and policy changes to ensure accountability.

#### **2. Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously**

Opportunities are created within the school setting that allow students to provide valuable insight into their wellbeing, education, school culture and to improve our risk management. The student leadership team, along with student representatives, regularly engage in the decision-making process with matters that relate to them and the well being of those in the wider school community.

**3. Families and communities are informed and involved.**

Leighland Christian School exists to partner with parents in the education of their children. Clear, concise and consistent communication is an essential part of this process to ensure transparent processes to ensure families are able to provide insight and valuable feedback.

**4. Equity is promoted and diversity respected.**

Equity for all refers to the three prime groups subject to higher degrees of vulnerability. These include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, the culturally and linguistically diverse and people with a disability. Leighland Christian School provides a number of support programs for students and vulnerable people and celebrates diversity.

**5. People working with children are suitable and supported.**

Leighland Christian School undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process to ensure that:

- Staff & volunteers all have current Working with Vulnerable People Card
- Volunteers, relief and teacher aides complete an induction program which includes reading and signing the Confidentiality Agreement and Volunteer Policy with the volunteer agreement, 'Working at Leighland' document read and agreed to
- Yearly presentation/engagement with relevant policies at staff meeting
- Ongoing access to relevant Professional Development opportunities in these areas

**6. Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focussed.**

Staff are to follow the steps outlined in this policy to ensure correct processes are adhered to. The flowcharts ensure that the voice of the child is honoured and that they are clear, concise and easy to follow for all.

**7. Staff and School Board are equipped with knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training.**

Leighland Christian School staff participate in:

- Yearly revision of policies
- Professional discussions as agenda items on staff meeting
- Access to external information through online resources eg Black Dog Institute
- SALT Compliance training
- Access to external agencies when and if needed including Police, Department of Communities, Children, Youth and Families – Department of Health
- Professional learning opportunities are made available to staff

**8. Volunteers, contractors and parent/guardian helpers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through information training sessions.**

- Any person working in the school in a volunteer capacity needs to complete a training induction or information session to ensure they understand the measures the school has in place around child safety.
- These will be mandatory meetings held once a year or as the need arises
- Attendees will be issued with a certificate of attendance
- All volunteers need to hold a current Working with Vulnerable People Card
- All attendees will sign off as having read Leighland Christian School's Child Safe Policy

**9. Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.**

Every effort is made to mitigate risk of abuse or harm to a student when undertaking any activity either on or off site through:

- Comprehensive risk assessments completed through ERM
- Parent and guardian information and permission when appropriate or as required
- Clear policy processes
- Students' complete ICT User Agreements prior to accessing devices
- Parent and student information sessions
- Teaching digital citizenship and safe online practices

**10. Implementation of child safe standards is continuously reviewed and improved; and**

Staff complete continuous professional development through SALT Compliance training to ensure up to date and relevant policy and procedural changes are adhered to. Schools' policy documentation is also updated regularly, according to the set cyclic review dates.

**11. Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe.**

The Child Safe Committee runs as a Senior Leadership sub-committee over the course of the school year to ensure accurate and timely updates. As required, additional development of organisational specific policies and procedures may be needed to ensure effective implementation within the school setting.

**12. Flow Chart of Responsibility**

- Refer to Appendix G and H

**13. Risk Management**

Every effort will be made to ensure that Child Safe matters are dealt with in a timely, confidential and thorough manner. Risks will be identified as part of this process for those involved. In addition to human risk factors considered, school processes and protocols will also be reviewed in a timely manner once a complaint has reached a resolution to ensure best practice has been maintained.

**14. Record Keeping**

All reports of alleged abuse or harm, or risk thereof, must be recorded in the form of a confidential report taken by the person to whom the harm or risk was disclosed. This report should be strictly factual in nature and include:

- Places, times & dates
- Names of people
- Observable behaviour or evidence of harm
- Be signed by the person making the report

This written report must then be given to the Child Safety Officer on the relevant campus. At no time can the person whom the harm is reported to promise to keep it confidential as each staff member or volunteer are mandatory reporters, which means they may be required to make a formal report to the police or Strong Families, Safe Kids with the Child Safety Officer, Campus Principal or Executive Principal.

The role of Child Safety officer within the school is to act as an advocate for students, provide support for the family, training for staff and volunteers, support students social, emotional and spiritual needs in a day-to-day capacity, especially if a report has been made or is being investigated.

## 15. Privacy and confidentiality

As a school, we aim to handle child safe issues, complaints or investigations in a timely, transparent, confidential, fair and accountable way.

Appendix A – Complaints management at a glance

Appendix B – Making a formal complaint

Appendix C – Complaints flow chart by a primary school student, parent or guardian

Appendix D - Complaints flow chart by a secondary school student, parent or guardian

Appendix E - Complaints flow chart against the Campus Principal, Executive Principal or School Board

Appendix F – Safety Management System

Appendix G – Responding to incidents, disclosures or suspicion of harmful sexual behaviour (STAFF)

Appendix H – Responding to incidents, disclosures or suspicion of harmful sexual behaviour (SCHOOL LEADERSHIP)

## 16. Responsibilities and Expectations

Staff will be trained using a variety of examples and scenarios so that they develop the practical skills to handle school based responsibilities.

## 17. Roles and Responsibilities

### ❖ Child Safety Officers - 2023

- ☒ Burnie – Bianca Niebuur, Deputy Head of Primary
- ☒ Ulverstone Primary – Cassie Miles, Deputy Head of Primary
- ☒ Ulverstone Secondary – Bettina Townsend, Head of Secondary - Student Wellbeing

The Child Safety Officers will complete a monthly report that is submitted to the Campus and Executive Principals outlining the students they have been supporting in a formal capacity over that time, including a summary of the concern, support and follow up taken.

The Child Safety Officers will attend ongoing training relevant to their positions to ensure that their processes, procedures and support reflect best and most up to date practices.

As the Secondary Child Safety Officer may at times be dealing with students who have turned 18, and are therefore considered adults, additional processes will be followed with each of these students completing an age-appropriate information session.

- ❖ Executive Principal Natasha MacKinnon
- ❖ Campus Principals (Burnie) Elizabeth Scheu (Ulverstone) Kelly Dernehl
- ❖ Compliance (Business) Manager David Grey
- ❖ Senior Leadership Team
  - ☒ Director of Learning, Curriculum and Assessment Patrick Fabian
  - ☒ Assistant Principal Katrina McNab
  - ☒ Deputy Head of Primary (Burnie) Bianca Niebuur
  - ☒ Deputy Head of Primary (Ulverstone) Cassie Miles
- Teachers, counsellors and chaplains
- Learning Support Aides, Volunteers, Parents and Guardians
- Vulnerable people & children

## 18. Internal support services for staff and students

School Chaplains

School Counsellors

Child Safety Officers

Members of the Senior Leadership Team  
Members of Senior staff  
Classroom teachers  
Learning Support aides  
Administration Staff

## 19. Scenario examples for discussion

**Scenario #1** A student in grade 4 repeatedly comes to school with no food, in a dirty uniform that is not washed, smells, unsanitary, and he is constantly tired and anxious. What would you do?

**Scenario #2** A student (16) broke up with her boyfriend (17) a few months ago. He is really upset and can't get over her. Even though she has asked him to give her some space, he sends her direct messages on social media all the time. She is shocked when he sends her some images of her when they were in a relationship, She describes the images as inappropriate to share. He doesn't include a message with the photos. She comes to you for help. What should you do?

**Scenario #3** A student in Year 8 (14 years old) comes to you and discloses that he has been in a relationship with a female student at your school for the past 3 months. Over that time, he has felt increasing pressure from his girlfriend to have sex and on the weekend, this occurred. His girlfriend is in Year 12 and is 18 years old. He now feels uncomfortable with the relationship and does not know what to do. What do you do?

## 20. External Stakeholder information

Department for Education, Children and Young People [Child Safety Service - The Department for Education, Children and Young People Tasmania \(decyp.tas.gov.au\)](http://decyp.tas.gov.au)

Strong Families, Safe Kids [Strong Families Safe Kids | Advice and Referral Line Tasmania](http://strongfamilies.tas.gov.au)

Tasmania Police 131444

## 21. Acknowledgements, Resources and Supporting documents

- [Bettercarenetwork.org](http://bettercarenetwork.org)
- Child Safe – safe people, safe programs, safe places
- [Framework for implementation of National Principles for Child Safe Organisations \(health.tas.gov.au\)](http://health.tas.gov.au)
- [Save the Children's Definition of Child Protection | Save the Children's Resource Centre](http://savechildren.org.au)

## APPENDIX

Appendix B – Making a formal complaint

Appendix C – Complaints flow chart by a primary school student, parent or guardian

Appendix D - Complaints flow chart by a secondary school student, parent or guardian

Appendix E - Complaints flow chart against the Campus Principal, Executive Principal or School Board

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