INTRODUCTION

Son Centre Christian College is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse.

All children are precious in the sight of God. The Bible indicates that the nurture of children is a high priority in the community with specific responsibility being given to parents.

Everyone working at Son Centre Christian College is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is

1. To facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within Son Centre Christian College.
2. To work towards an organisational culture of child safety.
3. To prevent child abuse within Son Centre Christian College.
4. To ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs.
5. To provide guidance to staff/volunteers/contractors as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation.
6. To provide a clear statement to staff/volunteers/contractors forbidding any such abuse.
7. To provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

POLICY

Son Centre Christian College is committed to promoting and protecting at all times the best interests of children involved in its programs.

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse.

Son Centre Christian College has zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at Son Centre Christian College is responsible for the care and protection of the children within our care and reporting information about suspected child abuse.

Child protection is a shared responsibility between the Son Centre Christian College, all employees, workers, contractors, associates, and members of the Son Centre Christian College community.
Child protection training is mandatory for all Board members, staff members and direct-contact volunteers.

Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our school environment.

Son Centre Christian College supports and respects all children, staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.

If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse, telephone 000.

**AUTHORISATION**

Warrick Grey  
Board Chairman  
August 18, 2016  
Son Centre Christian College
RESPONSIBILITIES

The **Board** of Son Centre Christian College has ultimate responsibility for the detection and prevention of child abuse and is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place. The Board is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures and a Child Protection Code of Conduct are in place.

The **Principal** of Son Centre Christian College is responsible for:

- Dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse;
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and the organisation’s Code of Conduct;
- Ensuring that all adults within the Son Centre Christian College community are aware of their obligation to report suspected sexual abuse of a child in accordance with these policies and procedures;
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of their obligation to observe the Code of Conduct (particularly as it relates to child safety);
- Providing support for staff, contractors and volunteers in undertaking their child protection responsibilities.
- Promote child safety at all times;
- Assess the risk of child abuse within their area of control and eradicate / minimise any risk to the extent possible;
- Educate employees about the prevention and detection of child abuse; and
- Facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities.

Management should be familiar with the types of abuse that might occur within their area of responsibility and be alert for any indications of such conduct.

All **staff/volunteers/contractors** share in the responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse, and must:

- Familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the Code of Conduct, and Son Centre Christian College’s policy and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements;
- Report any reasonable belief that a child’s safety is at risk to the relevant authorities (such as the police and / or the state-based child protection service) and fulfil their obligations as mandatory reporters;
• Report any suspicion that a child’s safety may be at risk to their supervisor (or, if their supervisor is involved in the suspicion, to a responsible person in the organisation); and
• Provide an environment that is supportive of all children’s emotional and physical safety.

DEFINITIONS

Child means a person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Child protection means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.

Child abuse means all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial (e.g. for financial gain) or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a child.

Child sexual assault is any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child’s inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.

Direct-contact volunteers are those volunteers that are involved in providing support, guidance and supervision to students and who could potentially have direct unsupervised contact with students during the normal course of providing volunteer service, for example camps and excursions, coaching and assisting in learning activities.

Reasonable grounds for belief is a belief based on reasonable grounds that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively assessed. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

(a) The child is in need of protection,
(b) The child has suffered or is likely to suffer “significant harm as a result of physical injury”,
(c) The parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

A ‘reasonable belief’ or a ‘belief on reasonable grounds’ is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

A ‘reasonable belief’ is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a ‘reasonable belief’ might be formed if:
a) A child states that they have been physically or sexually abused;
b) A child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);
c) Someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused;
d) Professional observations of the child’s behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused; and/or
e) Signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused

**EDUCATION AND SUPPORT OF CHILD SAFETY ISSUES**

Within the context of Son Centre Christian College there will be a commitment for staff members and parents to partner with each other to nurture and encourage students to achieve their God-given potential. This will include staff members being trained to ensure that child safety is ‘front of mind’ at all times. We will regularly talk about child safety in our meetings with a view to eliminating or reducing risks to the safety of students.

Students will be educated in standards of behaviour, healthy and respectful relationships, resilience and child abuse. There will be age appropriate educational sessions presented on the topic of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours and self-protection strategies. Once aspect of this training will be occur through the 6-week Personal Safety Success Training course provided by the Mallee Sexual Unit once every two years for all Grade 3-6 students biannually.

If a child discloses child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse, they will receive the appropriate support or assistance from our College chaplain, staff and/or other appropriate outside services.

**EMPLOYMENT OF NEW PERSONNEL**

Son Centre Christian College undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all workers and volunteers which aims to:

- Promote and protect the safety of all children under the care of the organisation;
- Identify the safest and most suitable people who share Son Centre Christian College’s values and commitment to protect children; and
- Prevent a person from working at Son Centre Christian College if they pose a risk to children.

Son Centre Christian College requires all workers/volunteers to pass through the organisation’s recruitment and screening processes prior to commencing their engagement with Son Centre Christian College.

Persons applying for a role as a teacher must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching.
Son Centre Christian College may require applicants to provide a police check in accordance with the law and as appropriate, before they commence working at Son Centre Christian College and during their time with us at regular intervals.

Son Centre Christian College will undertake thorough reference checks as per the approved internal procedure.

Once engaged, workers/volunteers must review and acknowledge their understanding of this Policy.

**RISK MANAGEMENT**

Son Centre Christian College will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach.

Son Centre Christian College will have a risk and compliance sub-committee committed to identifying and managing risks at Son Centre Christian College. Risk and compliance sub-committee members will receive regular training in relation to child safety.

**REPORTING**

**Mandatory Reporters**

People are required under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005, section 182 (1) to notify known or suspected children in need of protection to the Child Protection Service at the Department of Human Services to report and abuse situations. In the immediate context of the school these are teachers, school welfare officers, and principals. Other relevant Mandatory Reporters include nurses, medical practitioners, youth workers, psychologists, and police.

**Legislative Requirements**

The Children, Youth and Families Act 2005, section 182 (1) requires members of the certain professional groups (see definition of Mandatory Reporters) to report cases where they believe, based on reasonable grounds, that a child (i.e. under 17 years of age) is in need of protection because the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from such harm.

Section 184 of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 states that these mandatory reporters must report this belief and the reasonable grounds for forming it as soon as practicable (a) after forming the belief and (b) after each occasion on which they become aware of any further reasonable grounds for the belief. Grounds for belief are matters about which a person has become aware and any opinions based on those matters.

The person lodging the report does not have to prove that abuse has taken place. The legislative requirement is to report your belief that a child is in need of protection.

If a person honestly and reasonably believes the grounds for the belief have been the subject of a notification to Child Protection Service at the Department of Human Services by another person, this is a defence to a charge under sub-section (1) section 184 of the Act for non-reporting.
The prescribed penalty in the Act for non-compliance is 10 penalty points. The Act is not designed to be punitive. However, in blatant cases of failure to report, proceedings may be brought on an individual by the Police.

Physical injury resulting from abuse or neglect and sexual abuse are clear grounds for reporting the need for protection. Where there are concerns that a child is at risk of significant harm from emotional abuse or neglect, these cases could be discussed with Child Protection Service at the Department of Human Services.

**Voluntary Reporting**

Any staff member, volunteer or contractor may make a report to the appropriate child protection service or police if the person has a significant concern for the wellbeing of a child (i.e. under 17 years of age). They should also advise their supervisor or the Principal about their concern.

In situations where the supervisor or Principal is suspected of involvement in the activity, or if the person having the suspicion does not believe that the matter is being appropriately addressed or dealt with, the matter should be reported to the next highest level of supervision or the police.

The appropriate child services for this area are:

**Department of Health and Human Services**

During business hours – North-western rural and regional 1800 675 598

After hours and to report concerns about the immediate safety of a child:

Child Protection Crisis Line (24 hours) – 131278

**Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team**

Western Victoria – (03) 5448 1420

**INVESTIGATING**

If the appropriate child protection service or the police decide to conduct an investigation of this report, all employees, contractors or volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, the Principal will consult with the authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate. If it is decided that such an investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the Principal may decide to conduct such an investigation. All employees, contractors and volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Any such investigation will be conducted according to the rules of natural justice.

The Principal will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other members of staff may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.

After an initial review and a determination that the suspected abuse warrants additional investigation, the Principal shall coordinate the investigation with the appropriate investigators.
and / or law enforcement officials. Internal or external legal representatives will be involved in the process, as deemed appropriate.

**RESPONDING**

If it is alleged that a member of staff, contractor or a volunteer may have committed an offence or have breached the organisation’s policies or its Code of Conduct the person concerned may be stood down (with pay, where applicable) while an investigation is conducted.

If the investigation concludes that on the balance of probabilities an offence (or a breach of the organisation’s policies or Code of Conduct) has occurred then disciplinary action may follow, up to and including dismissal or cessation of involvement with the organisation. The findings of the investigation will also be reported to any external body as required.

**PRIVACY**

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone’s safety. Son Centre Christian College will have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected.

Everyone is entitled to know how the personal information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will be able to access it.

**REVIEWING**

Every two years, and following every reportable incident, a review shall be conducted to assess whether the organisation’s child protection policies or procedures require modification to better protect the children under the organisation’s care.

**RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- Confidentiality Policy
- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct Policy
- Risk Management Policy
- Staff Recruitment Policy
- Staff Induction Policy
- This policy must be read in conjunction with:
  - The law of the Commonwealth or of the relevant state or territory;
  - The organisation’s Code of Conduct;
  - Termination of Employment Policy and Misconduct Procedures.

**AUTHORISATION**

**RACHEL RICHARDSON**

**JULY 29, 2016**

Son Centre Christian College