



## 3 Child Safe Standards

### **Child Safety Policy**

If you are a non-English speaker who needs help to understand this Policy, please contact the School Principal.

### **Background**

Sophia Mundi is a child-safe school and is committed to meeting our legal duty of care to children. Every child, without discrimination, has a right to feel and be safe.

Our School is a place where children are nurtured and supported, so that they can develop their latent capacities and grow into well-rounded human beings. This can happen only when our children are safe and feel safe. We are therefore committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

We do not tolerate any form of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously and consistently with our policies and procedures. We take appropriate actions to protect the safety of children from physical, sexual, emotional, racial and cultural or religious abuse, and from neglect. We identify risks early to prevent child abuse.

We are committed to the cultural safety of all of our children, including Aboriginal children and children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and we are committed to providing a

safe environment for children with a disability. We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome.

We recognise that the world is changing quickly, and new kinds of risks to child safety regularly arise. We are committed to regularly reviewing and amending our policies, and developing new procedures, in a timely way to address new risks as and when they arise, and to ensure that our policies are appropriate to dealing with all known risks.

It is an expectation of each member of the school community that they ensure that their behaviours and actions respect, protect and safeguard children; and they must abide by our Child Safety Code of Conduct.

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone who works at or with Sophia Mundi understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility, and understands our Child Safety Policy, Child Protection Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct. Our School works to create a culture in which everyone feels comfortable to discuss suspicions or allegations of child abuse or other child safety issues. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We have a rigorous recruitment process directed to employing excellent teachers and staff who will create a safe environment for children. Our recruitment process includes police checks and detailed reference checks. Additionally, we ensure that all persons working at or with our School, including volunteers, hold a working with children check as required by the *Working with Children Act 2005*.

Board of Directors has approved this Child Safety Policy on 1/02/2024. It will be reviewed on 1/02/2025.

## **Purpose**

Our Child Safety Policy demonstrates the School's strong commitment to child safety and wellbeing and to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly environment. It provides an overview of the policies and practices that we have developed to keep our students safe, including from abuse or other harm.

Our Child Safety Policy outlines the key elements of our approach to implementing Ministerial Order 1359 (which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments) and to the School as a child safe organisation.

It informs the School community about everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards students and guides the policies, processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work, which are set out in the School's Child Safety Program. (1)

Sophia Mundi's Child Safety Policy is to be read and understood in conjunction with, the [Victorian Child Safe Standards](#) and [Ministerial Order 1359](#).

The Child Safety Policy provides the framework for:

- the implementation of the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 1359
- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures, consistent with [PROTECT Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosure and Suspicions of Child Abuse](#) (PROTECT Four Critical Actions) and [PROTECT Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#) (Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending), that promote child protection, safety and wellbeing within the School
- the creation of a safe and supportive School environment and a positive and robust child safe culture
- the promotion and open discussion of child safety issues within the School
- compliance with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child safety and wellbeing, including child protection, in Victoria.

## Scope

The School's Child Safety Policy applies to all adults in the School community, whether or not their work involves direct contact with students, including:

- Staff and Direct Contact Contractors (including External Education Providers) who are "school staff" within the meaning of Ministerial Order 1359
- other types of Contractors
- Volunteers
- Visitors.

This Policy applies in all physical, virtual and online School environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including all locations provided for a student's use, (for example on-site and off-site School grounds, sporting events, camps and excursions and environments provided by External Education Providers and other Contractors).

## Definitions

Definitions of the following terms used in the Child Safety Policy can be found in [Child Safety Program Definitions](#):

- child/young person
- child abuse and other harm
- child safety and wellbeing
- child safety incident or concern
- child-connected work
- child-related work
- contractor
- school environment
- school staff
- school governing authority
- staff/staff member
- student
- visitor
- volunteer.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

Child safety and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility. All adults in the School community have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety, wellbeing and protection of students.

Specific responsibilities are summarised at the end of this Policy.

## **Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing**

All children and young people who come to Sophia Mundi Steiner School have a right to feel and be safe. We are committed to providing a child safe and child friendly environment, where children and young people are safe and feel safe and can actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.

We have a zero tolerance for child abuse and other harm and are committed to acting in students' best interests and keeping them safe from harm.

The School regards its child safety responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child safety and wellbeing laws and regulations and maintaining a child safe culture.

Each member of the School community has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role that they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all students is at the forefront of all that they do and every decision that they make.

## Child Safety Standards

Sophia Mundi Steiner School has also developed specific child safe principles and values relevant to its own specific circumstances that guide our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect students from abuse and harm.

### The Victorian Child Safe Standards

The Victorian Child Safe Standards were originally developed in response to the Victorian Parliament's Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations. They were replaced by a set of new Standards in 2022, to reflect the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and to support greater national consistency. There are 11 Victorian Child Safe Standards. They are:

#### Victoria's Child Safe Standards

- **Child Safe Standard 1** – Establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.
- **Child Safe Standard 2** – Ensure that child safety and wellbeing are embedded in school leadership, governance and culture.
- **Child Safe Standard 3** – Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
- **Child Safe Standard 4** – Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
- **Child Safe Standard 5** – Equity is upheld and diverse needs are respected in policy and practice.
- **Child Safe Standard 6** – People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
- **Child Safe Standard 7** – Ensure that processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.
- **Child Safe Standard 8** – Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
- **Child Safe Standard 9** – Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
- **Child Safe Standard 10** – Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
- **Child Safe Standard 11** – Policies and procedures that document how schools are safe for children, young people and students.
- Ministerial Order 1359 provides the framework for child safety in schools.

The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) monitors and enforces compliance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards for all registered schools in Victoria.

## Sophia Mundi's Child Safety Principles and Values

1. All children have the right to be safe.
2. The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
3. The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected.
4. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our **Child Safe Code of Conduct** and Staff and Student Professional Boundaries policy.
5. The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.
6. Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our **School** community.
7. Procedures are in place to screen all staff, Direct Contact Volunteers\*\*, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers who have direct contact with children.
8. Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
9. **Child safety** training is mandatory for all **Board of Directors** members, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers.
10. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the **School** community.
11. Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Children and other children who are vulnerable (such as children in out-of-home care or children of diverse sexuality) have the right to special care and support.
12. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

## Sophia Mundi's Policy

### Child Safety Codes of Conduct

Our Child Safety Codes of Conduct include a [Child Safe Code of Conduct](#) and a [Staff and Student Professional Boundaries](#) policy. Together, these Codes of Conduct set boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults in our School community and students, including in physical, online and virtual environments.

We also have a [Student Code of Conduct](#), which includes standards of behaviour for students relevant to child safety and wellbeing.

Our Child Safety Codes of Conduct include clear processes to report inappropriate behaviour. We publish our Child Safety Codes of Conduct on our public website so that everyone can easily find out what behaviours are acceptable and unacceptable at our School and how to report inappropriate behaviour.

We also provide additional information to students and families about the Child Safety Codes of Conduct, to ensure that they know what behaviours are acceptable and unacceptable and how to report inappropriate behaviour.

## **Cultural Safety**

At Sophia Mundi Steiner School, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe School where the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, values and practices are respected.

We identify, confront and do not tolerate racism, and we address any instances of racism within the school environment with appropriate consequences.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, we recognise the link between culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, their families and their communities (including local Aboriginal communities relevant to the School) to have a voice and presence in our School's planning, policies, and activities.

The specific strategies that we have adopted to promote cultural safety in our School community are set out in our [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students \(Child Safety\)](#) policy.

## **Student Empowerment and Participation**

Sophia Mundi Steiner School is a child safe and child-centred organisation, and we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We ensure that our physical, virtual and online environments are friendly and welcoming to all children and young people.

We actively seek to include students in decisions that affect them. This includes decisions about organisational planning, delivery of services, management of facilities, and learning and assessment environments.

We ensure that students know about their rights to safety, information and participation. We actively seek to understand what makes students feel safe in our School and regularly communicate with students about what they can do if they feel unsafe.

We recognise the importance of friendships and encourage respectful relationships, strong friendships and support from peers.

The specific strategies that we have adopted to promote the participation of and empowerment of students, and to implement all of the above obligations, are set out in the [Participation and Empowerment of Students](#) section of our Child Safety Program.

## **Parent/Carer, Family and Community Engagement at the School**

The School recognises that parents and carers have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their children. We ensure that they participate in decisions affecting their children.

We ensure that families and relevant communities (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, other communities that make up our Staff and student cohort, and the local community in which our School operates) know about the School's operations and policies, including its Child Safety Policy and the Child Safety Codes of Conduct, record keeping practices, risk management, and complaints and investigation processes.

We actively seek to include families and relevant communities in decisions about organisational planning, delivery of services, management of facilities, and learning and assessment environments.

We build cultural safety at the School through partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as well as with culturally and linguistically diverse communities that make up our staff and student cohort.

The specific strategies that we have adopted to promote the engagement of parents/carers, families, and relevant communities in child safety and wellbeing at the School, to make information about child safety and wellbeing available and accessible, and to implement all of the above obligations, are set out in the [Family and Community Involvement in Child Safety policy](#) in our Child Safety Program.

## **Diversity and Equity**

Our School values diversity and does not tolerate any discriminatory practices. To achieve this, we:

- support the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families
- support the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families
- support students with disability and their families and act to promote their participation
- support students and families of diverse sexuality and act to promote their participation
- seek to recruit a workforce that reflects a diversity of cultures, abilities and identities
- ensure that all Staff, Direct Contact Volunteers and Direct Contact Contractors have training about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, disability, culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and those with particular experiences or needs
- have a physical environment that actively celebrates diverse cultures and recognises cultural difference
- commit to promoting the inclusion of students of differing abilities.

The specific strategies that we have adopted to promote equity and respect diversity at the School are set out in the Family and Community Involvement, Cultural Safety and Equity/Diversity section of our Child Safety Program.

## **Suitable Staff, Volunteers and Contractors and Child Safety Knowledge, Skills and Awareness (Child Safety Human Resources Management)**

The specific human resources management strategies that we have adopted at the School to promote child safety and wellbeing are set out in the Child Safety Human Resources Management section of our Child Safety Program. They include the following:

### **Recruitment and Screening**

Sophia Mundi Steiner School applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of Staff, Volunteers and Contractors to engage the most suitable and appropriate people to work with our students. Our practices include:

- making our commitment to child safety and wellbeing clear in recruitment advertising and documentation
- requiring all Staff and relevant Volunteers and Contractors to maintain a valid VIT Registration or WWC (working with children) clearance, and sighting, verifying and recording this information

- using additional selection, background checking and screening processes that take into account child safety considerations.

## **Training on and Information About Child Safety**

As a part of Sophia Mundi's induction process, all Staff, as well as relevant Volunteers and Contractors, must complete our child safety induction program, which includes information about our child safety policies, practices and procedures.

All Staff, as well as relevant Volunteers and Contractors also receive refresher and ongoing child safety training at least annually.

Our child safety induction and ongoing training program includes information about:

- this Child Safety Policy
- the Child Safety Codes of Conduct
- recognising child abuse and other harm and identifying key indicators, including harm caused by other children and young people
- our policies and procedures for responding to and reporting child safety incidents or concerns (including mandatory reporting, reporting to police and reportable conduct obligations)
- our policies and procedures for information sharing and record keeping about child safety incidents and concerns
- WWC clearances and other child safety and wellbeing human resources practices
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the School's environments.

The School provides all Visitors to the School, including Casual Volunteers and Contractors, with information about the Child Safe Codes of Conduct and how to report child safety incidents or concerns to the School and to relevant external authorities.

Board of Directors also receives child safety training at least annually, to ensure that its members are equipped with the knowledge required to make decisions in the best interests of student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our School's environment. Its training includes guidance on:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse
- child safety and wellbeing risks in our School's environment
- the School's child safety policies, procedures, codes and practices.

## Ongoing Supervision, Management and Support

The School's Child Protection Officers and Management Team provide supervision and support to all Staff, Direct Contact and Regular Volunteers, and Direct Contact and Regular Contractors to ensure that they are compliant with the School's approach to child safety and wellbeing. Our child safety supervision and support program includes:

- annual performance reviews for all staff members
- appointing a supervising staff member to Direct Contact Volunteers/Contractors and to those Regular Volunteers/Contractors who are engaged in "child-connected work"
- professional development programs for Staff that include child safety education.

The School swiftly manages any inappropriate behaviour towards students, in accordance with our policies and legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing is the paramount consideration when managing inappropriate behaviour.

## Complaints and Reporting Processes: The School's Response to Child Safety Incidents or Concerns

Sophia Mundi Steiner School fosters a culture that encourages everyone in the School community to raise concerns and complaints about child safety and wellbeing. We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns set out in the **Procedures** below, and in our Disputes and Complaints Policy and Procedures.

We also have clear procedures that all Staff, Volunteers and Contractors must follow whenever they witness, suspect or receive a complaint about a child safety incident or concern involving a student, a staff member, a Volunteer, a Contractor or the School, set out in the **Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns** section of the Child Safety Program. These are summarised for students, parents/carers and other members of the School community in our public-facing Procedures for managing Child Safety Incidents or Concerns at Sophia Mundi and public-facing Procedures for Managing Child Safety incidents or concerns as Sophia Mundi.

Our Positive Learning Policy cover complaints and concerns relating to physical violence, bullying and other harmful student behaviours.

The School will take appropriate, prompt action in response to all child safety incidents or concerns, including all complaints, allegations or disclosures of abuse or other harm, when Staff, Volunteers, Contractors, students, parents/carers or anyone else reports these to the School.

The safety and wellbeing of the student/s involved in the matter will be the paramount consideration when responding to child safety incidents and concerns. The School follows the National Office of Child Safety's [Complaint Handling Guide: Upholding the rights of children and young people](#) and the Commission for Children and Young People's [Including Children and Young People in Reportable Conduct Investigations resources](#) when investigating and responding to child safety incidents and concerns.

The School's response will include:

- externally reporting all matters that meet the required relevant thresholds to Child Protection (Mandatory Reports), the Police (Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse), the CCYP (Reportable Conduct), and/or the Victorian Institute of Teaching (Teacher Misconduct), depending on the issues raised and consistent with [PROTECT Four Critical Actions](#) and [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#)
- fully cooperating with any resulting investigation by an external agency
- protecting any student connected to the child safety incident or concern until it is resolved and providing ongoing support to those affected
- taking particular measures in response to child safety incidents or concerns about an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student, a student from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, a student with disability, and other vulnerable students (such as students who are unable to live at home or students who identify as lesbian gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex)
- sharing information with, or requesting information from, external people or agencies as permitted or required under the Child Information Sharing Scheme and/or the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme
- securing and retaining records of the child safety incident or concern and the School's response to it
- taking broader actions to improve child safety at the School (including systemic reviews and resulting improvements).

## Child Safety Risk Management

Sophia Mundi Steiner School recognises the importance of a risk management approach to child safety and to minimising the risk of harm to children and young people without compromising their rights to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities. The School's Child Safety Risk Management Strategy can be found [here](#).

We have implemented a comprehensive [Risk Management Program](#) to assist in the identification, assessment and management of child safety risks in all School environments.

Our **Purchasing Goods and Services Policy and Procedures** makes sure that we ensure the safety of children, young people and students when we purchase facilities, goods and services.

We identify, assess and manage child safety risks in all School environments, based on a range of factors including the nature of our School's activities, its physical, virtual and online environments and the characteristics of the student body. We use this information to inform our policies, procedures and activity planning.

We record identified risks to child safety and wellbeing in our Child Safety Risk Register, along with the actions in place at the School to manage these risks. Board of Directors, the Principal and/or the Management Team monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these actions at least annually.

## **Child Safety Privacy and Information Sharing**

The School collects, uses and discloses information about students and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws and other relevant laws, including laws that permit the School to disclose information about child safety and wellbeing to external people and agencies. For information about how the School collects, uses and discloses this information, refer to our Privacy Policy.

## **Child Safety Record Keeping**

The School is committed to best practice record keeping about child safety incidents and concerns in accordance with Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards (including minimum retention periods).

The School records all internal and external reports of child safety incidents and concerns, as well as any other responses by the School using [PROTECT Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse - A Template for Victorian Schools](#) or, if the incident or concern involves student sexual offending, the [PROTECT Responding to Suspected Student Sexual Offending - A Template for Victorian Schools](#).

When keeping records of child safety incidents or concerns, the School maintains confidentiality and privacy for students and families in accordance with federal and state privacy legislation.

## **Communications**

Sophia Mundi Steiner School is committed to communicating our child safety and wellbeing strategies, policies and procedures to our School community through the measures set out in the Implementation section below. In addition, we:

- display PROTECT posters around the School
- provide child safety information and updates through school website
- include child safety as a regular agenda item at Management Team meetings and staff meetings.

## **Child Safety Program and Practice Review**

Sophia Mundi Steiner School is committed to the continuous improvement of the policies and procedures making up our entire Child Safety Program and of our child safety and wellbeing practices. We review the Program as a whole annually (or earlier if a significant child safety incident occurs at the School or legislation changes) for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child safety and wellbeing related laws, regulations and standards.

When undertaking these reviews, the School:

- actively seeks, actions, and incorporates feedback from students, families, the wider School community, Staff, Volunteers and Contractors
- analyses any complaints and child safety incidents that may have occurred
- communicates any learnings, adjustments or amendments to policy and practice widely throughout the School community.

## **Child Safety Procedures**

### **Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns to the School**

***Whenever there are concerns that a child or young person is in immediate danger call the Police on 000.***

***Any person, including all Staff, Volunteers, Contractors, parents/carers and students, can at any time report concerns about the wellbeing of a child aged under 17 to Child Protection by:***

- during business hours (8:45am-5:00pm, Monday to Friday), contacting the Child Protection intake service for the local government area where the child resides, listed [here](#).
- after hours, telephoning 13 12 78.

## **Staff, Volunteers and Contractors**

Staff, Volunteers and Contractors must follow our Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns and report child safety incidents or concerns internally to a Child Protection Officer or the Principal.

Where the incident or concerns involves the Principal, internal reports should instead be made to the Assistant Principal.

We recognise that some individuals, particularly children, face additional vulnerabilities to child abuse and other harm, as well as additional barriers to disclosing child safety incidents or concerns. Our Child Safety Program provides guidance on identifying additional vulnerabilities and barriers, and contains strategies for supporting these individuals to participate in the School community and enabling them to disclose child safety incidents or concerns to the School.

## **Students, Parents/Carers and Community Members**

**Students** who have child safety concerns about themselves or any other child or student aged 18 or over can:

- disclose the child safety incident or concern to any staff member, Volunteer or Contractor. This might be done:
  - verbally
  - in writing
  - through electronic means (such as email)
  - indirectly (such as in written assignments, in artworks or in any other way)
- use the School's anonymous Dropbox, which is located Library to disclose anonymously
- contact Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800.

For more information, students can refer to the child-friendly version of our Child Safety Complaints Management Policy and Procedures, available school website or the school library.

**Parents/carers, family members and other community members** who have child safety concerns or who suspect that a child or young person associated with the School may be subject to abuse or other harm can contact:

- the Principal, who is the School's Senior Child Safety Officer, by phoning (03) 9419 9229 or emailing [principal@sophiamundi.vic.edu.au](mailto:principal@sophiamundi.vic.edu.au)
- if the concern relates to the Principal, the Assistant Principal by Amanda Colebrook 94199229.

**Any person** can also contact the Senior Child Safety Officer, or the Assistant Principal if they have concerns regarding the School's leadership in relation to child safety.

Communications will be treated confidentially on a 'need to know basis'.

## **The School's Response to and External Reporting of Child Safety Incidents or Concerns**

Our Child Safety Program sets out the procedures, consistent with [PROTECT Four Critical Actions](#) and [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#), that the School will follow for any child safety incident or concern involving a student, School Staff, Volunteer, Contractor or Visitor, or other person connected to the School or the School environment.

It also provides guidance for all Staff, Volunteers and Contractors on their obligations to respond to and report, to relevant external authorities, child safety incidents and concerns.

These procedures and guidance are summarised in our public-facing Procedures for managing Child Safety Incidents or Concerns at Sophia Mundi and public-facing Procedures for Managing Child Safety incidents or concerns as Sophia Mundi.

## **Support for Students, Families and Staff Following Child Safety Incident or Disclosure**

Child safety incidents or concerns can cause trauma and significantly impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children, as well as on their families. In addition to reporting and referral to the relevant authorities, the School plays a central role in addressing this trauma and has a duty of care to ensure that students feel safe and supported at School.

The School employs a range of measures to support students affected by a child safety incident or concern depending on the particular circumstances of the matter and of the student and their family:

- Child Protection Officers will work with the student and their family to develop a Student Support Plan
- support strategies that could be considered for students and/or their families might include offering or organising referrals to internal or external support, such as the School Wellbeing Coordinator, bi-cultural workers and/or translators, or an external support agency and/or child advocacy organisation which specialises in supporting children and young people impacted by abuse or other harm.

The School offers former students who may disclose historical child safety incidents or concerns from their time at the School similar support.

Witnessing a child safety incident or receiving a disclosure of abuse or other harm can be a distressing experience for Staff, Volunteers and Contractors involved. The School assists impacted Staff, Volunteers and Contractors to access necessary support.

## **Embedding a Culture of Child Safety: Our Child Safety Program**

Our Child Safety Program itself is one of the strategies employed by Sophia Mundi Steiner School to embed a culture of child safety at the School.

Our Child Safety Program relates to all aspects of child safety and wellbeing and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to create and maintain a child safe environment and culture at the School. It includes:

- the Child Safety Codes of Conduct
- clear information about what is child abuse and other harm and key indicators of child abuse and other harm
- clear procedures, that are consistent with [PROTECT Four Critical Actions](#) and [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#), for responding to and reporting child safety incidents or concerns internally to a Child Protection Officer, and for responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse or other harm
- strategies to support, encourage and enable Staff, Volunteers, Contractors, parents/carers and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters
- procedures for recruiting and screening members of the Management Team, Staff, Volunteers and Contractors
- procedures for reporting to external agencies, that are consistent with [PROTECT Four Critical Actions](#) and [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#), including Mandatory Reporting to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (Child Protection), reporting reportable conduct to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) and reporting child sexual abuse to police
- pastoral care strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe
- strategies to support and encourage the participation and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and students with disability
- child safety training

- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse or other harm to protect, support and assist students
- 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 and Ministerial Order 1359)
- a system for continuous review and improvement.

## Child Safety Responsibilities at the School

Child safety and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility. Specific responsibilities at the School include:

### The School Child Protection Officer/s

One or more staff members are nominated as a Schools Child Protection Officer. Child Protection Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child safety and wellbeing, including but not limited to child protection issues. They are a point of contact for raising child safety concerns within the School. They are also responsible for championing child safety within the School and assisting in coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

Our Child Protection Officers are:

Name	Role	Contact Details
Natalie Jensen	Principal	principal@sophiamundi.vic.edu.au
Amanda Colebrook	Assistant Principal Secondary	Amanda.Colebrook@sophiamundi.vic.edu.au
Peter Henderson	Assistant Principal Primary	Peter.Henderson@sophiamundi.vic.edu.au
Giulia Musci	Wellbeing Officer	Giulia.Musci@sophiamundi.vic.edu.au

## **The Senior Child Safety Officer**

Sophia Mundi Steiner School has also appointed Natalie Jensen (Principal) as the School Senior Child Safety Officer.

The Senior Child Safety Officer has additional child safety responsibilities, such as being a first point of contact for all child safety concerns or queries for the wider community and coordinating the School's response to child safety incidents in consultation with the Management Team and Board of Directors.

## **Board of Directors**

Board of Directors is Sophia Mundi's "school governing authority" for the purposes of Ministerial Order 1359.

Board of Directors is responsible for:

- championing and promoting a child safe culture within the School
- approving our Child Safety Program, including this Child Safety Policy and the Child Safety Codes of Conduct

It is responsible for ensuring that the School has appropriate resources to effectively implement the Victorian Child Safe Standards, Ministerial Order 1359 and our Child Safety Program.

## **The Board of Directors's Child Safe Guardian**

One member of the Board is appointed or identified as a Child Safe Guardian. The Child Safe Guardian is responsible for ensuring that child safety is prioritised, modelled and championed at the Board level of the School. The Child Safe Guardian drives the Board's child safety responsibilities by ensuring that the Board meets those responsibilities.

At Sophia Mundi Steiner School, our Board's Child Safe Guardian is Cheryl Nekvapil.

## **The Principal**

The Principal is responsible, and will be accountable, for the operational management of the School, and the implementation of the Child Safety Program. The Principal is responsible for:

- taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Safety Policy and the School's Child Safety Program is implemented effectively and followed
- ensuring that a strong and sustainable child safe culture is maintained within the School, including by:
  - modelling the Child Safe Code of Conduct, and reinforcing high standards of child safe behaviours between adults and students and between students
  - facilitating the participation of students, families, Staff and other members of the School community in promoting and improving child safety and wellbeing at the School
  - promoting regular and open discussion of child safety and wellbeing issues within the School community
  - facilitating regular professional learning for Staff and relevant Volunteers and Contractors about child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and preventing and responding to child safety incidents and concerns
  - creating an environment where child safety incidents, concerns and complaints are readily raised with the School and where no one is discouraged from reporting child safety incidents or concerns to relevant external authorities.

The Principal is the "head" of the School for the purposes of the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

## Staff

All Staff are "school staff" for the purposes of Ministerial Order 1359.

All Staff are required to comply with our Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Codes of Conduct, be familiar with our Child Safety Program and understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse and other harm, and WWC Checks.

It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key indicators of child abuse and other harm, to be observant, and to raise all child safety incidents and concerns with a Child Protection Officer.

To meet these obligations, all Staff must:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and ongoing training provided by the School
- always follow the School's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures in the Child Safety Program
- act in accordance with the Child Safety Codes of Conduct
- identify and raise child safety incidents and concerns in accordance with our Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns, and follow the PROTECT Four

### Critical Actions and Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending

- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard when making decisions that affect them
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

## **Volunteers**

A Volunteer is a someone who performs work for the School in a School environment without remuneration or reward. Volunteers may be family members of students, or from the wider School or local community. Volunteers are not "school staff" for the purposes of Ministerial Order 1359.

All Volunteers at the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of students in the School environment.

To meet these obligations:

- all Volunteers must comply with our Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Codes of Conduct
- Direct Contact Volunteers (and, if required by the School, other Volunteers such as Regular Volunteers who are engaged in "child-connected work") must:
  - participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and ongoing training provided by the School
  - be aware of key indicators of child abuse and other harm
  - understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse and other harm
  - raise all child safety concerns with a Child Protection Officer.

## **Contractors**

A Contractor is someone engaged by the School to perform specific tasks. Contractors are not employees of the School. However, Contractors who have direct contact with children are "school staff" for the purposes of Ministerial Order 1359.

Contractors may include maintenance and building personnel, consultants, music tutors, sports coaches, and cleaners as well as external education providers (organisations that the School has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the School).

All Contractors are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of students in the School environment.

To meet these obligations:

- all Contractors must comply with our Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Codes of Conduct.
- Direct Contact Contractors (and, if required by the School, other Contractors such as Regular Contractors who are engaged in “child-connected work”) must:
  - participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and ongoing training provided by the School
  - be aware of key indicators of child abuse and other harm
  - understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse and other harm
  - raise all child safety concerns with a Child Protection Officer.

The School may include these requirements in the written agreement between it and the Contractor.

## **Implementation**

The Child Safety Policy is published on our School’s public website.

It is provided to new Staff, and to Direct Contact and Regular Volunteers, and Direct Contact and Regular Contractors at their induction or prior to them commencing their work at the School.

The School provides all Visitors to the School, including Casual Volunteers and Casual Contractors, with information about the Child Safety Policy (including in particular the Child Safety Codes of Conduct and how to report child safety incidents or concerns to the School and to relevant external authorities).

We also communicate the Child Safety Policy to Staff, Volunteers, Contractors and other members of the School community through online platforms and email..

We provide a child-friendly version of the Child Safety Policy and our Statement of Commitment to Child Safety to all students and that can be found school website.

## **Breach of the Child Safety Policy**

Sophia Mundi Steiner School enforces this Child Safety Policy and our Child Safety Codes of Conduct. In the event of any non-compliance, we will instigate a review that may result in a range of

measures including (depending on the severity of the breach):

- remedial education
- counselling
- increased supervision
- the restriction of duties
- suspension
- in the case of serious breaches, termination of employment, contract or engagement.

## Source of Obligation

The Child Safety Policy implements, and is to be read and understood in conjunction with:

- Victorian Child Safe Standards, Standard 2
- Ministerial Order 1359, Clause 6

## Policy Review

A review of the Child Safety Policy is conducted annually or earlier if required, such as if a significant child safety incident occurs at the School or due to changes in legislation.

Board of Directors is responsible for ensuring that this Policy is reviewed and updated as needed and for approving this Policy.

(1) The Child Safety Program is the name given to the full collection of policies and procedures that assist the School to be a child safe organisation and to meet the requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 1359. It includes policies and procedures for:

- responding to and reporting child safety incidents and concerns
- child safe human resources management (including WWC clearances)
- participation and empowerment of students
- informing and involving families and relevant communities in child safeguarding issues
- equity and diversity
- child safeguarding risk management strategies
- strategies for embedding a culture of child safety at the School and
- regular reviews and continuous improvement of child safety policies, procedures and practices.