

CHILD SAFE STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT AND PRINCIPLES

Child Safe Statement of Commitment and Principles

Gilson College is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making. A child safe environment is one where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.

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

This commitment to ensuring the safety, welfare and wellbeing of all children and young people in the College will be maintained at all times during their participation in learning and other activities in all College environments, including, but not limited to, at school, on excursions and camps, on outdoor education activities, and online.

Particular attention will be given to the inclusiveness and cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children and young people with a disability, and other vulnerable children and young people, including overseas students.

Gilson College has zero tolerance for child abuse and is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse.

At Gilson College, a child includes Gilson College students, visiting students and international students.

Child abuse includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect, and a child's exposure to family violence.

Broader child safety issues arising from our common-law duty of care, as well as our institutional Child Safe Duty of Care, are dealt with through our Student Duty of Care Program.

If you have a belief or suspicion that a child is being, or has been, subjected to any form of abuse you must contact the Victorian Child Protection Service or, where you need guidance on making a report or have questions regarding child safety, contact one of the School's appointed Child Safety Officers – The Principal, Heads of Campus and Heads of Schools. Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.

Within the College, a best practice approach to creating a safe environment includes procedures for responding to allegations and disclosures of reportable conduct of children and young people, based on the following principles:

1. All children and young people have a right to safety and freedom from abuse of any kind.
2. All adults working with children and young people have a responsibility to care for them, to promote their wellbeing and to protect them from any form of reportable conduct.
3. When any action is taken to prevent, or respond to any type of reportable conduct, the welfare and wellbeing of the child or young person are the primary concerns.
4. The integrity of the family unit is respected but not to the detriment of the child or young person.
5. The dignity of persons involved in situations where reportable conduct is suspected or disclosed, should be respected and they should be treated with fairness, sensitivity, dignity and respect.

6. In the interests of justice, appropriate confidentiality should be maintained, with information that relates to suspected or disclosed abuse being provided only to those who have a right or a need to be informed.

In its planning, decision-making and operations Gilson College will:

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

Providing ongoing support:

1. Gilson College will provide ongoing support for children and young people impacted by abuse - either through disclosure or who are otherwise linked to suspected abuse, through the steps given for making a Student Support Plan, as detailed in '*Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools*'
2. Ongoing student support will be arranged by the relevant College Child Safety Officer
3. Steps or actions will include:
4. Provide support for the student during interviews
5. Establish a Student Support Plan
6. Establish a Student Support Group
7. Ensure ongoing review of the Student's Support Plan
8. Ongoing support will be provided by those such as the relevant College Child Safety Officer, trusted teachers, Level Leaders, Chaplains, Wellbeing Officers, and Counsellors.
9. Referrals may be made to relevant organisations, such as Headspace, GP, or child psychologist.