CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

ADVOCATING FOR THE BEST INTERESTS OF CHILDREN

Contents

Warning:

We understand the risk of child abuse in our society. The content in this document includes explicit descriptions of child abuse and may trigger feelings of distress. If you need to talk to someone it is recommended, you contact your GP or access the free Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offered by G8 Education.

1 Purpose

This Child Protection Policy sets out G8 Education's approach to the on-going provision of a Child Safe Organisation where children and young people are in a safe and harmonious environment during their care. This policy provides the framework for our approach to the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, Victorian Child Safe Standards and the New South Wales Child Safe Standards.

2 Scope

This policy applies to all G8 Education team members, volunteers, and contractors regardless of whether they work in direct contact with children or young people across all areas of the organisation.

3 Background

G8 Education recognises our ability to make a substantial social contribution toward child protection in Australia due to the size of our network and the breadth of the communities in which we operate. The Board and Executive Leadership Team have committed to implementing sector recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and apply the recommended National Principles for Child Safe Organisation's and mandatory Child Safe Standards into our operations.

4 Policy Statement

G8 Education is committed to ensuring the safety, protection, and wellbeing of children by providing child safe environments where all children are respected, valued, and encouraged to reach their full potential.

We understand the risk and ongoing impact of child abuse and neglect in our society. We understand our collective responsibility to embed a leading culture of child safety and protection that seeks to remove the secrecy surrounding child abuse and neglect.

The best interest and wellbeing of the child is the primary consideration for G8 Education. Our commitment is demonstrated by how G8 Education implements the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and state specific Child Safe Standards as follows:

Child Safety and Wellbeing

- Having child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures, and governance arrangements in place to guide prevention, record keeping, information sharing and external reporting obligations.
- Providing a Child Protection Statement of Commitment outlining expected behaviours, interactions and conduct of team members.
- Undertaking risk assessments and management process to minimise risk to children.
- Consulting with experts regarding child safety to inform our practice.

Child Participation

- Providing programs and resources to educate and engage with children about their rights, safe environment, protective strategies for staying safe and seeking help when needed.
- Providing team members with information and training to ensure they are skilled to engage positively with children and understand child rights-based approaches to practice.
- Encourage child participation in decision-making, particularly regarding safety and wellbeing issues.

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- Having processes in place to regularly review opportunities for children's participation and seeking children's consent for relevant activities.

Involving families and communities

- Building cultural safety and inclusion through partnerships and respectful relationships with families and communities.

- Having our child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures accessible to families and the community.

- Regularly seeking input of families and communities regarding G8 Education's approach to child safety and wellbeing through regular policy and procedure review processes.

- Obtaining parental consent for relevant activities.

Respecting equity and diversity

- Implementing policies regarding accessibility, anti-discrimination, cultural safety, diversity, and inclusion.

- Defining transparent strategies used at all levels throughout the organisation to counter discrimination and exclusion, while providing guidance on creating safe and welcoming environments for all children.

- Supporting team members to identify and respond to children with diverse backgrounds and needs.

- Addressing any additional needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disabilities, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children who are unable to live at home, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children.

- Providing accessible, child safe and culturally safe information to children about the support and complaints process.

- Building a nurturing and positive environment to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children feel safe and supported to be themselves and express their culture thereby encouraging their sense of self and identity.

- Providing an inclusive program that affords all children a sense of belonging whereby children see themselves, their cultures, ethnicities, languages, family structures. Religions, spirituality, gender, sexuality and developmental capabilities reflected in the choice of resources, pedagogies and environments.

- A commitment to reduce rather than reinforce injustices experienced by children and families who identify with broad and fluid conceptions of diversity and difference.

Ensuring team members are suitable and supported

- Having policies to guide recruitment, including advertising, selection criteria, pre-employment screening, referee checks and duty statements.

- Ensuring systems are in place that ensure all relevant team members have current working with children checks.

- Providing induction and ongoing training for all team members, volunteers and agency staff regarding their child safety and wellbeing responsibilities, G8 Educations Child Protection policies and procedures, external reporting obligations and the Child Protection Statement of Commitment.

- Having policies and strategies for ongoing supervision, support, and performance management for team members.

- By continually improving our child safety and protection culture through structured and informal communication and engagement activities.

Child focussed complaint system

- Having accessible policies for receiving, responding to, and investigating complaints or child disclosures of child harm or abuse prioritising the safety and wellbeing of children.

- Responding effectively to concerns or complaints where harm is caused to a child by another child.

- Having processes in place for reporting to external authorities, record keeping and information sharing to ensure G8 Education meets its reporting requirements, employment law and privacy obligations.

- Providing information to team members on the complaints process, their roles and responsibilities, and reporting and privacy obligations when responding to children who disclose abuse.

Team member knowledge, skills and awareness

- Providing periodic training and information for team members regarding relevant safety and wellbeing polices, children's rights, child development, recognising signs of harm or abuse, responding to disclosures, understanding, and responding to harmful behaviours by a child towards another child, record keeping, risk assessment and management, external reporting obligations and creating culturally safe environments.

- Ensuring team members and volunteers who disclose harm or risk to children are supported.

Safe physical and online environment

- Having a risk management process for physical and online environments that address risks arising from those environment, organisational activities, adult to child interactions and child to child interactions.

- Supporting team members to minimise risk without compromising children's right to privacy, access to information and learning opportunities.

- Managing team member online environment usage to be in line with the Child Protection Statement of Commitment and online safety policies.

- Ensuring visitors to centres are appropriately logged and supervised.

- Having detailed procurement policies to ensure child safety and wellbeing when contracting third parties.

- Designing spaces to support supervision of children and also respect children's privacy.

Review of child safe policies

- Being committed to reviewing this policy and other G8 Education child safety and wellbeing policies on a regular basis.

- Engaging children, families, communities, and team members in the review process and providing feedback on review outcomes.

- Regularly analyse complaints, incidents, and concerns to identify causes or systemic weaknesses and implement improvement plans.

Documenting policies and procedures

- Ensuring all Child Protection documents are easily accessible in a language and format that is easy to understand, culturally safe and informed by stakeholder consultation.

5   Responsibilities

Children come first, and this is non-negotiable. We expect team members to treat all children with respect, dignity and understanding. All actions and interactions are to be in the best interest of the child and consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The expected behaviour of G8 Education team members is detailed in the Child Protection Statement of Commitment.

The Board of G8 Education will:

- Monitor the risk profile of G8 Education and ensure mitigation strategies are effective in managing and responding efficiently to any serious incident, suspicion or allegation.

- Ensure appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place for the detection and prevention of child abuse and neglect.

- Ensure appropriate policies and procedures, including the Child Protection Statement of Commitment, are in place to define expected behaviour and guide interactions.

Our Leadership team will:

- Provide a Child Protection Policy Statement of commitment and intent.

- Foster a proactive leadership approach to promote openness and transparency.

- Provide induction, training and ongoing information in recognising and responding to suspicion, allegation or disclosure of child abuse, neglect and grooming.

- Provide all team members, children and families with regular information to increase awareness of child abuse and neglect indicators including grooming behaviours as a lead indicator for intervention.

- Ensure our information management systems and practices are secure to protect children and their information.

- Ensure vigilance is applied in pre-empting harm that may occur.

- Facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities.

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

Centre Managers will:

- Create a child friendly environment and a protective culture that openly discusses child safety, removes secrecy and provides opportunities for children to disclose.

- Abide by and enforce the Child Protection Statement of Commitment.

- Lead the implementation of the Child Protection Policy and framework and provide education and mentoring to team members to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities.

- Maintain vigilance for, and respond to, any behaviours of concern, misconduct or criminal acts, including any suspicions on reasonable grounds of abuse.

- Ensure the recruitment process is followed so only suitably qualified people are employed at the centre.

- Follow incident management and investigation processes and provide education and mentoring to team members to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities.

- Monitor centre ratios ensuring adequate required supervision of children is always in place.

- Support the nominated Child Protection Champion by allocating time for them to complete the responsibilities required by the position and be available to support team members.

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- Conduct and review centre risk assessments to identify and manage any risk to the safety and protection of children.
- Maintain relationships with relevant external Child Protection Officers and engage in case conferences for children who are under Child Protection Orders.
- Support vulnerable children and identify funding sources to enable increased support to be provided.

Our Centre team members will:

- Commit to upholding the G8 Education core values and behavioural competencies.
- Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotions and physical safety.
- Hold themselves and other team members to account through the Child Protection Statement of Commitment and be vigilant in reporting any breach of the code.
- Verify their commitment to upholding the Child Protection Statement of Commitment by signing a declaration of intent.
- Be observant and maintain vigilance to recognise, response, refer and follow up any child protection incident.
- Report any suspicion, made on reasonable grounds, that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities (such as the police and/or the state-based child protection service), fulfil their obligations as mandatory reporters and apply the Child Protection Reporting Standard contained within the Child Protection Practice Manual.
- Embed cultural safety principles of inclusiveness and acceptance to offer greater protection for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from a culturally, linguistic, or diverse background and children with a disability.
- Familiarise themselves with relevant national and state legislation, the G8 Education policy, procedures and the G8 Child Protection Statement of Commitment in relation to child protection and comply with all requirements.
- Maintain dignity, privacy and confidentiality at all times.

6   Definitions

For the purpose of this policy the following terms are used:

TERM	DEFINITION
Child abuse and neglect	The World Health Organisation defines child abuse and neglect as: "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 the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power." The five main subtypes of child abuse and neglect are: • physical abuse/ assault • emotional abuse/ Ill-treatment • neglect • sexual abuse • exposure to family violence.
Child Protection	Is the protection of children from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect.
Child Protection Reporting Standard	Mandatory reporting of any reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed or neglected or is at risk of harm or neglect.

TERM	DEFINITION
Child Protection Statement of Commitment	A collection of rules, social norms and responsibilities that include what is and is not acceptable or expected behaviour or proper practice and company expectations.
Child Safe Environment	A safe and friendly setting where children feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential.
Child Safe Organisation	An organisation that consciously and systematically: creates an environment where children and young people's safety and wellbeing is at the centre of thought, values, and actions.
Complaint	A statement that something is unsatisfactory or unacceptable.
Cultural Safety	A safe and friendly environment where children feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential.
Disclosure	The act of making something known.
Grooming	Action by an adult of preparing a child for sexual activity, often this will involve progressive desensitization to sexual activity (such as with increased physical contact or exposure to sexual material and acts), finding opportunities to be alone unsupervised together, encouraging secrecy in the relationship and/or utilising power and control over the child such as through threats, use of force or authority and making the child fearful of reporting unwanted behaviour.
Mandatory Reporters	Persons who have regular contact with vulnerable people and are therefore legally required to ensure a report is made when abuse is observed or suspected.
Mandatory Reporting	Legislated requirement for selected groups of people to report suspected child abuse and neglect to government authorities.
Protection	A defence or shield from loss, injury, harm.
Reportable Conduct	Includes a sexual offence (even prior to criminal proceedings commencing), sexual misconduct or physical violence committed against a child, with or in the presence of a child, behaviour causing significant emotional or psychological harm, significant neglect of a child.
Team Member	A person belonging to a specific group of people involved in attempting to achieve a common goal. It is to be taken that throughout this document, reference to team member will also include volunteers.

7   Supporting Documents

The documents listed below abide by this policy to support and guide our commitment to operating a Child Safe Organisation:

- Child Protection Statement of Commitment
- Child Protection Practice Manual
- Complaints Policy
- Employee Assistance Program
- Health and Safety Policy
- Investigations Policy
- Risk Management Policy and Framework
- Whistleblower Policy
- Child Protection Mandatory Reporting
- Child Protection Risk Assessment Guidelines

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- [Child Protection Report Form](#)
- [Child Wellbeing Form](#)
- [IO1 Notification of Incident Form](#) and [CO1 Notification of Complaint Form](#)
- [Injury on Intake Form](#)
- [Mandatory Reporting Enquiry Form](#)
- State Based Reportable Conduct Forms:
  - [Phase 1 – 7 Day Notification (NSW, QLD, SA, WA)](#)
  - [Phase 1 – 3 Day Notification (VIC)](#)
  - [Phase 1 – 7 Day Notification (ACT)](#)
  - [Phase 2 – Child Protection Investigation Plan](#)
  - [Phase 3 – Child Protection Investigation Report](#)

8   Legislation

National Quality Framework (NQF)

Children (Education and Care Services) National Law	
S162A	Persons in day-to-day charge and nominated supervisors to have child protection training
S165	Supervision of children
S166	Inappropriate discipline
S167	Protection of children from harm and hazard

Children (Education and Care Services) National Regulations	
R84	Awareness of child protection law
R85-87	Incidents, injury, trauma, and illness
R168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures

National Quality Standard (NQS)

Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety		
2.2	Safety	Each child is respected
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented
2.2.3	Child Protection	Management, educators, and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect
Quality Area 4: Staffing Arrangements		
4.2	Professionalism	Management, educators, and staff are collaborative, respectful, and ethical
4.2.2	Professional Standards	Professional standards guide practice, interactions, and relationships
Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children		
5.1.1	Positive educator to children interactions	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident, and included
5.1.2	Dignity and rights of the child	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained

5.2.2	Self-Regulation	Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others, and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts

Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with families and communities		
6.2.2	Access and Participation	Effective partnerships support children's access, inclusion, and participation in the program
Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership		
7.1	Governance	Governance supports the operation of a quality service
7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service
7.1.3	Roles and Responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood and support effective decision making and operation of service
7.2.1	Continuous Improvement	There is an effective self-assessment and quality improvement process in place
7.2.3	Development of Professionals	Educators, coordinators, and staff members performance is regularly evaluated, and individual plans are in place to support learning and development

State Child Protection Legislation

State	Legislation	Regulatory Authority
ACT	Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT)	Child and Youth Protection Services
	Ombudsman Act 1989 (ACT)	ACT Ombudsman
NSW	Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)	Department of Communities and Justice
	The Children's Guardian Act 2019	Office of the Children's Guardian
QLD	Child Protection Act 1999 (QLD)	Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women
SA	Children's Protection Act 1993 (SA)	Department for Child Protection
VIC	Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (VIC)	Department of Health and Human Services
	Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Reportable Conduct Scheme)	Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP)
WA	Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA)	Department of Communities, Child Protection and Family Support
	Parliamentary Commissioner Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Act 2022	WA Ombudsman

New South Wales Child Safe Standards

Standard 1:	Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
Standard 2:	Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
Standard 3:	Families and communities are informed and involved
Standard 4:	Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account
Standard 5:	People working with children are suitable and supported
Standard 6:	Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child-focused
Standard 7:	Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training
Standard 8:	Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur
Standard 9:	Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved
Standard 10:	Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe.

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Victoria's Child Safe Standards

Standard 1:	Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued
Standard 2:	Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
Standard 3:	Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
Standard 4:	Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing
Standard 5:	Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice
Standard 6:	People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice
Standard 7:	Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused
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
Standard 9:	Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed
Standard 10:	Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved
Standard 11:	Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

Principle 1:	Child Safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance, and culture
Principle 2:	Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
Principle 3:	Families and communities are informed and involved.
Principle 4:	Equity is upheld, and diverse needs are taken into account.
Principle 5:	People working with children are suitable and supported.
Principle 6:	Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focused.
Principle 7:	Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training.
Principle 8:	Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.
Principle 9:	Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved.
Principle 10:	Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe.

9   Related Source Acknowledgement

- https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/national-principles

- https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/australian-child-protection-legislation

- https://www.ombudsman.act.gov.au/improving-the-act/reportable-conduct

- https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/reportable-conduct-scheme

- https://www.csyw.qld.gov.au/child-family/protecting-children

- https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/

- https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/child-protection

- https://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/Pages/Home.aspx

- https://www.unicef.org.au/united-nations-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child