



Child Safe Program

TAS Child Safe Policy

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Background

The Armidale School is an Anglican, Co-educational School with both day and boarding facilities, and students ranging in age from 4 to 18 years.

Child safety is at the forefront of everything we do at TAS. The safety of the students in our care remains our overarching priority.

This Policy was approved by the Principal on 19 January 2023, and will be reviewed in January 2024.

Purpose

Our Child Safe Policy demonstrates the strong commitment of the School to child safety, and provides an outline of the policies and practices that we have developed to keep our students safe, including from abuse or other harm.

It is an overarching policy that provides the key elements of our approach to the School as a child safe organisation and sets the tone for the School's entire Child Safety Program.

The Child Safe Policy provides the framework for:

- the implementation of the [NSW Child Safe Standards](#) and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures 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 protection and safety in NSW.

Scope

The School's Child Safe Policy applies to all adults in the School community, including Staff, Volunteers, Contractors and Visitors.

This Policy applies in all School environments, both physical and online, and on-site and off-site School grounds (e.g. camps and excursions).

Definitions

Definitions of particular terms used in the School's Child Safe Policy can be found in the [Child Safety Program Definitions](#).

Roles and Responsibilities

Child protection and safety is everyone's responsibility. All adults in the School community have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety 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 The Armidale 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 are able to 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 Protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection 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 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 they make.

The School's Statement of Commitment to Child Safety has been designed to reflect the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

Child Safety Standards

The School's commitment to child safety is based on the NSW Child Safe Standards and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, which set out the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect students from abuse, neglect and other harm.

Requiring compliance with these Child Safety Standards is one of the strategies employed by The Board to embed a culture of child safety at the School.

The NSW Child Safe Standards

The NSW Child Safe Standards are based on the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, which themselves were based on recommendations by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The NSW Child Safe Standards have been designed to:

- help drive cultural change in organisations
- be principle-based and outcome-focused
- be flexible enough that they can be adapted by organisations of varying sizes and characteristics
- avoid placing undue burden on organisations
- help organisations address multiple risks
- balance caution and caring
- be a benchmark against which organisations can assess their child safe capability and set performance targets
- be of equal importance and interrelated.

In NSW, all organisations that fall under the Reportable Conduct Scheme (including the School), as well as some additional child-related organisations, must comply with the NSW Child Safe Standards.

The NSW Child Safe Standards are:

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

The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (National Principles) were developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission in response to recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The National Principles are comprised of 10 Principles that were informed by, but go further than, the 10 Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission. They are:

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
5. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
6. Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.
7. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
8. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
9. Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

The Armidale School'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 have the right to special care and support.
12. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

The Armidale School's Policy

Children and Young People's Rights to Safety, Information and Participation

The Armidale School is a child safe and child-centred organisation. Our environment is 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 recognise the importance of friendships and support from peers. We actively seek to understand what makes students feel safe in our organisation and regularly communicate with students about what they can do if they feel unsafe.

Parents/Carers, Families and Community Involvement 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 know about the School's operations and policies, including its Child Safe Policy and 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 relevant communities.

Valuing Diversity in the School Community

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 and 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.

Embedding a Culture of Child Safety

Our Child Safety Program

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

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

- Child Safety Codes of Conduct

- clear information as to what is child abuse and other harm and associated key indicators of abuse or other harm
- clear procedures for 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 Executive, Staff, Volunteers and Contractors
- procedures for reporting to external agencies, including Mandatory Reporting to DCJ, Reportable Conduct, and Reporting 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/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and students with disability
- Child Protection 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 NSW Child Safe Standards, and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations)
- a system for continuous review and improvement.

Training On and Information About the Child Safety Program

As a part of The Armidale School's induction process, we require all Staff, as well as relevant Volunteers and Contractors to complete induction in our Child Protection policies, practices and procedures.

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

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

The School provides Staff, Direct Contact and Regular Volunteers, and Direct Contact and Regular Contractors with support and supervision by their Head of Department, the School's Child Protection

Officers and/or Executive to ensure that they are compliant with the School's approach to child safety.

The School's Response to Child Safety Incidents or Concerns

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 School's response will include:

- externally reporting all matters that meet the required relevant thresholds to DCJ (Mandatory Reports), the Police (Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Offences), and/or the Office of the Children's Guardian (Reportable Conduct), depending on the issues raised
- 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 law
- 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 Human Resources Management

The Armidale 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 children and young people.

Our practices include:

- requiring all Staff and relevant Volunteers and Contractors to maintain a valid Working with Children Check clearance

- ensuring that all Staff and relevant Volunteers and Contractors undergo Child Safety induction, and ongoing education and training
- providing all Staff and relevant Volunteers and Contractors with regular supervision and performance monitoring by their Head of Department or a senior member of Staff
- ensuring that professional development programs for Staff include Child Safety education and training programs.

Child Safety Risk Management

The Armidale School recognises the importance of a risk management approach to minimising the potential for child abuse or harm to occur and we use this information to inform our policies, procedures and activity planning. The School's Child Safety Risk Management Strategy can be found [here](#).

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

We identify, assess and manage Child Protection risks in all School and School environments, based on a range of factors including the nature of our School's and School's activities, their physical and online environments and the characteristics of our students and boarding students, through our risk management policy and procedures. We use this information to inform our policies, procedures and activity planning.

Child Safety Record Keeping

The School is committed to best practice record keeping about child safety incidents and concerns.

All internal and external reports of child safety incidents and concerns, as well as any other responses by the School are recorded using the Responding to an Incident, Disclosure or Suspicion of Child Abuse, Grooming or Other Harm Template Form..

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.

Child Safety Program Review

The Armidale School is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Safety Program. The Program as a whole is reviewed annually for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child protection 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, and will communicate any adjustments or amendments 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 the Police should be called on 000.

Any person, including all Staff, Volunteers, Contractors, parents/carers and students, can at any time contact the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child or young person (aged under 18), or a class of children or young persons, is at risk of significant harm.

Voluntary reports to DCJ can be made by calling the Child Protection Helpline on 132 111 or 1800 212 936 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

Staff, Volunteers and Contractors

All Staff must follow our procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns and report all child safety incidents or concerns internally to a Child Protection Officer or the Principal.

Where the incident or concern involves the Principal, internal reports should instead be made to the Chairman.

We recognise that some children and young people face additional vulnerabilities to 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 for enabling them to disclose child safety incidents or concerns to the School.

Students, Parents/Carers and Community Members

Students at the School and boarding students at the School who have child safety concerns about themselves or any other child, young person 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 reporting mechanism through writing a note addressed to a child safety officer, which is located at reception to disclose anonymously
- contact Bravehearts.

For more information, refer to our Child Friendly Complaints Policy.

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 (02) 6776 5806 or emailing principal@as.edu.au; or
- the School's Senior School Child Protection Officer by dpoc@as.edu.au; or
- if the concern relates to the Principal, the Chairman by shempel@as.edu.au.

Any person can also contact the Principal, the Senior School Child Protection Officer or the Chairman if they have concerns regarding the School's or 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

Whenever there are concerns that a child or young person is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.

Our Child Safety Program sets out the procedures that the School will follow for any child safety incident or concern involving a student, School staff member, 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 Staff misconduct and reportable conduct handling procedure and public-facing Procedures for Managing Child Safety

Incidents or Concerns At or Involving the School or its Staff.

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 counsellor, bi-cultural workers and/or translators, or an external support agency and/or child advocacy organisation that 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.

Responsibilities for Child Safety at the School

Child safety and child protection is everyone's responsibility. Specific responsibilities include:

The School's Child Protection Officers

A number of senior staff members are nominated as the School's Child Protection Officers. Our Child Protection Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child safety and protection issues. They are a point of contact for raising child safety concerns within the School. They are also responsible for championing Child Protection within the School and assisting in coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

Our Child Protection Officers are:

Dr Rachel Horton

Ray Pearson

Pat Bradley

David Drain

AJ Whalley

Luke Polson

Scott Chittenden

Susannah Warrick

The Senior Child Safety Officer and Senior School Child Protection Officer

The Armidale School has also appointed Dr Rachel Horton as the School's Senior Child Safety Officer and Mr Ray Pearson and Ms Susannah Warrick as the School's Senior School Child Protection Officers.

The Senior Child Safety Officer has additional Child Protection 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 Executive and the Board.

The Senior School Child Protection Officer has similar responsibilities.

The Board

The Board is the School's governing body.

The Board is responsible for approving our Child Safety Program.

It is responsible for ensuring that the School has appropriate resources to effectively implement the NSW Child Safe Standards, the National Principles and our Child Safety Program.

The Armidale School

The Armidale School is the proprietor of the School and is responsible for implementing the governance arrangements set out for the School by The Board, including in relation to Child Safety.

The Principal

The Principal is responsible, and will be accountable for, the operational management of the School, and the Child Safety Program. The Principal is responsible for taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Safe Policy and the School's Child Safety Program is implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child safe culture is maintained within the School.

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

The Director of Risk and Compliance

The Director of Risk and Compliance is responsible, and will be accountable for, the operational management of the School. They are responsible for taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Safe Policy and the School's Child Safety Program is implemented effectively at the School and that a strong and sustainable child safe culture is maintained within the School.

The Executive

Each member of the School Executive is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available in their area of operations to allow the School's Child Safety Program to be effectively implemented within the School, and to support the Principal in the practical application of the School's Child Protection strategies, policies, procedures and work systems.

Staff

All Staff are required to comply with our Child Safe 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 Working with Children Checks.

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

To meet these obligations, all Staff must:

- participate in Child Protection induction and ongoing training provided by the School
- always follow the School's Child Protection 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

- 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 someone who works without payment or financial reward for the School. Volunteers may be family members of students, or from the wider School or local community.

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 Safe Policy and Child Safety Codes of Conduct
- Direct Contact Volunteers (and, if required by the School, other Volunteers, such as Regular Volunteers) must:
 - participate in Child Protection induction and ongoing training provided by the School
 - be aware of key indicators of child abuse and other harm
 - understand and meet their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse and other harm
 - raise all child safety concerns with one of the School's Child Protection Officers.

Contractors

A Contractor is someone engaged by the School to perform specific tasks. Contractors are not employees of the School.

Contractors may include maintenance and building personnel, consultants, casual teachers, tutors, sports coaches and School cleaners, as well as external education providers (organisations that the School has arranged to deliver a specific course of study that is part of the curriculum to a student or students enrolled at the School) and School caterers and dining room staff. Contractors also include music teachers and other extra-curricular teachers and instructors who are engaged by students and their families directly, rather than the School, but have an agreement with the School to use the School's facilities.

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

To meet these obligations:

- all Contractors engaged by the School must comply with our Child Safe Policy and Child Safety Codes of Conduct
- Direct Contact Contractors (and, if required by the School, other Contractors such as Regular Contractors) must:
 - participate in Child Protection induction and ongoing training provided by the School or provide evidence of other training
 - be aware of key indicators of child abuse and other harm
 - understand and meet their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse and other harm
 - raise all child safety concerns with on the School's Child Protection Officers.

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

Implementation

The Child Safe 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 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 Safe 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 Safe Policy to Staff, Volunteers, Contractors and other members of the School community through other mediums such as Parent Portal, Policy Connect, staff and volunteer induction.

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

Breach of the Child Safe Policy

The Armidale School enforces this Child Safe 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.

Policy Review

The Board conducts a review of this Child Safe Policy Annually or as the legislation changes. or earlier if required, such as due to changes in legislation.

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

Source of Obligation

The Armidale School's Child Safe Policy implements, and is to be read and understood in conjunction with:

- the [NSW Child Safe Standards](#)
- the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#).