



CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

1. Introduction

This policy describes the child safe environment practices of Walford Anglican School for Girls.

Walford acknowledges that every child and young person has the right to be safe from harm at all times. Child protection is paramount at Walford. The School has developed this Child Safe Environment Policy to ensure students know they have a right to be protected from harm, including child abuse. It also ensures staff and students alike know how to report any concerns or suspicions about child abuse and what processes exist to ensure matters are reported to the relevant authorities and responded to in a timely and sensitive manner.

All Governors, School employees, volunteers, contractors and anyone who performs work at Walford is expected to sign a written statement acknowledging that they understand and will comply with this policy.

2. Scope of Policy

This policy applies to:

- All staff, volunteers, parents and caregivers, children, and all other individuals involved with the School, irrespective of whether or not they are working directly with children and young people.
- All third-party providers and users of our site and services who are identified as working directly with children and young people, working in unsupervised proximity to children and young people, or accessing records relating to children and young people at Walford.
- All members of the Council of Governors and relevant sub-committees.

This policy applies:

- On the School premises.
- At functions, excursions, trips or camps organised by the School.
- At functions or occasions when members of the School community are representing the School.

3. Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Walford Anglican School for Girls is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all our students. The safety and protection of children is always the School's first priority.

The School has developed this policy as part of its commitment to a culture of zero tolerance to child abuse. The School recognises that providing a safe and caring environment at school is essential for student wellbeing, development and effective learning. The School supports the rights of children and young people, and will act without hesitation to protect children and young people from physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse, and neglect, to ensure a child safe environment is maintained at all times.

We acknowledge the vulnerability of children and young people in our care and take a proactive, preventative and participatory approach to protecting them through:

- The ongoing development of a positive, child safe culture.
- The development, implementation and monitoring of rigorous policies and procedures.
- Seeking to ensure that everyone is aware of their responsibilities, is vigilant and, if required, is prepared to respond in an appropriate and timely manner.

This policy is aligned with the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework and includes the following five key elements.

- Leadership: Principals and school leaders play an active role in building positive learning environments where the whole school community feels included, connected, safe and respected.
- Inclusion: All members of the school community are active participants in building a welcoming school culture that values diversity, and fosters positive, respectful relationships.
- Student Voice: Students are active participants in their own learning and wellbeing, feel connected and use their social and emotional skills to be respectful, resilient and safe.
- Partnerships: Families and communities collaborate as partners with the School to support student learning, safety and wellbeing.

- Support: School staff, students and families share and cultivate an understanding of wellbeing and support for positive behaviour and how this supports effective teaching and learning.

4. Related School Policies and Procedures

Additional policies to be read in conjunction with this policy are the:

- Staff Code of Behaviour
- Drugs and Alcohol in the Workplace Policy
- Behaviour Support Policy
- Antibullying and Harassment Policy (Whole School)
- Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy (Students)
- Critical Incident Policy
- Reporting Suspicions of Child Abuse (Mandatory Notification)
- Acceptable use of ICT (Staff and Students)
- Work Health Safety Policy
- Screening and Criminal History Checks
- Volunteers Policy
- Tutoring Policy
- Transport of Students Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Parent Code of Behaviour

These policies form part of the Walford Risk Management Strategy so as to reduce the risk of harm to students and to provide a child safe environment.

The policies include sets of procedures and codes of practice, which are available and used by staff and community members to help ensure that the School is a safe place for all its members and to educate and encourage the School community to:

- Protect children and young people.
- Provide a secure, safe environment where children and young people can be safe and feel safe .
- Intervene and advocate on behalf of children and young people.
- Actively work towards empowering children and young people.
- Ensure the principles of care, protection and safety are implemented.
- Work cooperatively with Government departments such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) or other external support providers.
- Where possible support the family as the unit primarily responsible for the care and protection of the child or young person.

5. Underlying Principles and Legislation

Walford is committed to promoting the safety, wellbeing and participation of children and young people. At Walford, children and young people are valued, respected and encouraged to participate. Walford is led by the *Child Safe Environments: Principles of Good Practice* which state that a child safe organisation:

- Takes a preventative, proactive and participatory stance on child protection issues where the safety and wellbeing of children is the paramount consideration when developing activities, policies and management practices;
- Is one that values and embraces the opinions and views of children;
- Encourages and assists children to build skills that will assist them to participate in society; and
- Takes action to protect children from physical, sexual, emotional and psychological harm or risk of harm.

The School is committed to:

- Supporting mandatory notifiers to report and respond to children and young people at risk of harm as outlined in the mandatory notification section;
- Ensuring safe environments for children and young people are maintained.
- Lodging a Child Safe Environments Compliance Statement with the SA Department of Human Services.
- Ensuring compliance with the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*, *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016*, *Statutes Amendment (Child Sexual Abuse) Act 2021*, and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.
- Ensuring bullying and harassment are not tolerated.
- Displaying information about services that can assist children and young people in areas accessible to children and young people.

The policy is underpinned by the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (2019), that:

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

The policy is additionally underpinned by the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* that identifies the following minimum requirements that organisations must meet:

- Identify and analyse risk of harm;
- Develop a clear and accessible child safe policy;
- Develop codes of conduct for adults and children;
- Choose suitable employees and volunteers;
- Support, train, supervise and enhance performance;
- Empower and promote the participation of children in decision-making and service development; and
- Report and respond appropriately to suspicions a child or young person is at risk.

6. Recruitment, Selection, Screening and Background Checks

All employees, volunteers (including Council and Council sub-committee members), agents, service users, contractors, subcontractors and third parties in prescribed positions at the School have a current Working with Children Check, and that these are updated every five years. Walford will not employ a person or allow someone to volunteer unless a Working with Children Check has been conducted in the preceding five years.

All employees, volunteers (including the Council of Governors and Council sub-committee members), agents, service users, contractors, subcontractors and third parties in prescribed positions at the School are additionally required to have DCSI criminal history checks every three years. For teaching staff, this requirement will be satisfied by the renewal of their Teacher's Registration Certificates. For school services staff, criminal history reports will be obtained every three years.

In order to thoroughly screen and assess potential employees and volunteers, Walford will also conduct background checks and risk assessments. This will involve:

- Undertaking face-to-face interviews;
- Confirming qualifications; and
- Obtaining a minimum of two reference checks, including the most recent employer.

It may also include:

- Conducting criminal history assessments; and/or
- Undertaking other background checks (e.g. psychological testing, or on-the-job observation).

Accurate, up to date and confidential records are kept of the following:

- Staff and volunteer training.
- Working With Children Checks.
- Criminal History Checks.
- Reports of any abuse or neglect and associated documentation.

The School's decision to employ or retain the services of a person with a recorded conviction shall be based on the principles that:

- People are entitled to be informed of allegations that may be made against them.
- People should be given the relevant information so that they can appeal against a decision if they wish.
- During the review of a decision, everyone affected by the decision should have the chance to put his/ her case, all relevant arguments should be heard, and all relevant information should be made available to all parties concerned.

- Decision-makers should act fairly and impartially.
- In appealing against a decision, people must be given the opportunity to: confirm their identity and the accuracy of any associated criminal history report (or the right to dispute the contents of a criminal history report); and provide additional relevant information.

Any disputes or grievances over the outcome of a decision will be resolved in accordance with the School's policy on handling disputes and grievances.

The School will keep up-to-date records of the criminal history checks on all staff. Any associated certificates and reports will be treated in confidence and stored securely in School files.

7. Responsibilities

Creating a child safe environment is a dynamic process that involves active participation and responsibility by all sectors of our School community. Sharing responsibility for the care and protection of children helps to develop a stronger, more child-focused community. Maintaining a child safe environment is the responsibility of the Council of Governors, the Principal and of all staff members.

The School

The School will ensure that:

- All new staff undergo an induction process. The School's child safe principles, policies and procedures, as well as their role and responsibilities, form an integral component of the induction. It is essential that new staff not only develop a thorough understanding of the legislative, administrative, social and education requirements to protect children but that they also engage with our proactive and positive child-safe ethos, culture and practices.
- Regular training and updates are provided to employees and volunteers in regard to: School policies, practices, Codes of Conduct, Protective Practices for staff and volunteers, legal obligations and mandatory notification.

The Principal

The Principal is responsible for the following:

- Promoting child protection wherever possible and ensuring that child protection is included regularly in staff training.
- Ensuring that child protection is included in the School's curriculum.
- When a mandatory report has been made, assisting staff to complete site documentation, and then signing the mandatory notification record and ensuring this is stored correctly.
- Ensuring that students and staff receive adequate support if involved in a harm or risk of harm situation.
- Ensuring that staff are supported when making a mandatory report.
- Ensuring that staff and volunteers have completed Working with Children Checks and RRHAN-EC training, and that third parties have completed Working with Children Checks where required.

Staff

All Walford staff, including teachers and coaches, are responsible for the following:

- Signing an agreement with the School which will include confirmation that the policy is understood and that they agree to abide by it.
- Completing RRHAN-EC (Responding to Risks of Harm, Abuse and Neglect – Education and Care) training and providing a current certificate to the School prior to the commencement of duties.
- Providing updated certifications (TRBSA, DSCI Criminal History Checks, RRHAN-EC) to the School prior to the expiration date.
- Complying with the Staff Code of Behaviour, which specifies standards of conduct and care, professional boundaries, ethical behaviour and unacceptable behaviour when working and interacting with children. The aim is to provide guidance to staff on how best to support students, and how to avoid or manage difficult situations. The Staff Code of Behaviour applies to all staff and breaches of the Code may result in disciplinary action or, in the case of serious breaches, dismissal.
- Reporting any suspected harm or risk of harm to the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78.
- Advising the Principal when a report is being/has been made (unless the report involves the Principal in which case it should be reported to a senior leader).
- When concerning behaviour has been observed, the staff member who witnessed it must alert an appropriate senior staff member.
- Taking prompt action if children and young people have disclosed information about inappropriate behaviours of adults.

- Ensuring appropriate confidentiality of information concerning children and young people, and other parties, in cases of suspected abuse or neglect.
- Referring public or media enquiries about these matters to the Principal and not publicly comment on them.
- When working one to one with students, follow Staff Code of Behaviour, Tutoring Policy, and Protective Practices, including making it public (open and visible), authorised (ensure you have your school leader's approval), and timely (consider the appropriateness of the time of day and length of time) and purposeful (linked to an identified learning or wellbeing need of the child or young person).

Boarding House Staff

Walford recognises that Boarding House staff face a specific challenge in providing an environment which is like home for children and young people in ways that do not compromise their professional boundaries or the welfare of children and young people.

The details outlined in this section are particularly pertinent for staff within the Boarding House.

Walford is committed to ensuring that Boarding House staff:

- Follow the Staff Code of Behaviour.
- Have a current Working with Children Check.
- Have completed Mandatory Notification training.
- Have a current Senior First Aid certificate.
- Complete the Australian Boarding Schools Association's 'Duty of Care' Certificate Course in Student Residential Care within 3 months of employment commencement.

Volunteers

Volunteers will:

- Provide a Working with Children Check or agree to undertake a WWCC screening at no expense to the applicant or hold a current (not due to expire within six months) Teacher Registration Certificate or Police Identity Card, clearly stating the purpose relates to working with children.
- Undertake appropriate induction training, as necessary Complete the online Responding to Risks of Harm, Abuse & Neglect in Education and Care Settings course for Volunteers and provide certification.

8. Empower and Promote the Participation of Children

The school-wide implementation of the Keeping Safe Child Protection Curriculum enables a cohesive, consistent and clear approach to developing four key aspects:

- The right to be safe.
- Relationships.
- Recognising and reporting abuse.
- Protective strategies.

The Keeping-Safe Child Protection Curriculum is embedded in Walford's teaching, learning and wellbeing programs.

Curriculum and Pastoral Care Strategies

Walford students will be supported to recognise and report abuse and neglect through the School's pastoral care and wellbeing programs.

All children and young people will be supported to build positive, respectful relationships with other children and young people and with adults.

All students will have the opportunity to build trusted relationships with adults in the School who can be approached with issues and concerns, such as Heads of House, Chaplain, Counsellor, Heads of School, Wellbeing Coordinator, class teachers and Mentors.

Student Voice

Walford encourages students to be actively involved in their education. Student voice allows students to engage, participate, lead and learn. We foster in our students a sense of social justice and develop their self-confidence and the skills to stand up for what they believe is just and fair.

Physical Environment

The School regularly reviews and monitors its physical environment through yard duty, inspections and general vigilance.

Online Environment

Walford acknowledges and accepts its responsibility to ensure that children are protected from harm when participating online. Walford is committed to following the requirements outlined in the 'Responding to Online Safety Incidents in South Australian Schools Guideline'. Walford is committed to creating a safer online environment by monitoring and educating students, staff and our community on the safe and responsible use of technology both at school and at home. This includes online and face-to-face training on social media, cyber bullying, online scams and artificial intelligence.

Walford has developed an Acceptable Use of Information and Communication Technology for Students Policy and an Information and Communication Technology Agreement for Students. Walford's Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy (Whole School), Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy (Students), and Student Code of Behaviour also address online safety.

9. Vulnerable Students

Walford acknowledges that there are vulnerable students who may be at a higher risk of experiencing harm or risk of harm due to their circumstances. These students may struggle with advocating for themselves or communicating their experiences to other people. Vulnerable students include students with disability, students in care and students who have recently arrived in Australia.

Walford will ensure that:

- School staff will consult with a student with disability, their parent and/or other associates (such as external allied health professionals). During consultation, staff will discuss the impact of the disability to assess the student's ability to advocate for themselves.
- Staff will be mindful of the individual circumstances of vulnerable students and will be mindful of the potential signs of harm or risk of harm that vulnerable students may exhibit.
- Individual student needs and circumstances will be considered when teaching the child protection curriculum. This includes being mindful of and sensitive to cultural differences.

10. Mandatory Reporting

Walford staff are educated and trained to recognise potential risks to children's safety including child abuse in any form. They are also "mandated" to report suspicions of child abuse to the statutory child protection agency via the Child Abuse Report Line: CARL 13 14 78. This includes even persons who are not mandated to report suspected child abuse or neglect under the legislation. In addition, staff and students are required to report any breaches of the Code of Behaviour to the Principal as soon as possible. (See Reporting Suspicions of Child Abuse guidelines)

All parties involved in situations where abuse is suspected, or allegations have been made against them will be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect in line with the Handling Complaints Policy and privacy requirements. The protection of children is always our paramount concern.

The School will act promptly and responsibly in dealing with any reports and allegations of abuse and neglect.

Any person who, while in the course of their work or volunteering, suspects that a child is being or has been harmed or is at risk of harm, must report their suspicion to the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL). This includes all persons who are not mandated to report suspected harm or risk of harm under the legislation. 000 should always be called in an emergency.

All serious concerns of suspected harm or risk of harm must be reported via CARL by phoning 13 14 78. The telephone line is available 24 hours a day. Serious concerns include the suspicion that a child or infant is in imminent or immediate danger of serious harm or serious injury, or is experiencing chronic neglect. The following information is required to be provided when making a report to CARL:

- The child's name, age, date of birth and address;
- A description of the injury, harm or risk of harm (current and previous);
- The child's current situation;
- The location of the child, parent or caregiver and alleged perpetrator; and
- When and how you found out about the harm or risk of harm.

Non-serious concerns can be reported via eCARL, which is the online child protection reporting system. Walford will maintain records of all mandated reports made. Documentation of any incident and follow up actions (e.g. reports, records of interviews and meetings) will be stored in a locked, confidential file within the Principal's office.

Walford will ensure that adequate support is provided to the student involved through provision of pastoral care in accordance with the student's needs and in alignment with the wellbeing framework.

It is a requirement that employees and volunteers inform the Principal of any mandatory notifications made. This will ensure that the Principal can put in place the appropriate action to support the child. If the concerns or allegations raised in the notification involve the Principal, then a senior leader or a member of the Council of Governors must be informed instead.

Failure to Report

The Statutes Amendment (Child Sexual Abuse) Act 2021 established criminal offences of:

- Failure to report child sexual abuse: a prescribed person is guilty of an offence if they fail to report to police that they know or suspect that another person (the abuser) is an employee of Walford and is, has, or is likely to sexually abuse a child; and
- Failure to protect a child from sexual abuse: a prescribed person is guilty of an offence if they know there is a substantial risk that another person, who is also an employee, will engage in the sexual abuse of a child; and the prescribed person has the power or responsibility to reduce or remove that risk but negligently fails to do so.

These offences carry a penalty of imprisonment. It is critical that all Walford staff, volunteers and contractors understand their legal obligations.

11. Policy and Risk Review

The Child Safe Environment Policy is reviewed and updated every two years. It is approved and endorsed by the Council of Governors and is published on the School website, the parent portal and on the School policy platform.

The policy will also be reviewed and updated when the School:

- Expands the services it offers to children and young people;
- Undergoes a substantial change to the responsible or managing authority; or
- Experiences an event or incident where children or young people were or could have been at risk of harm.

To help maintain a safe environment for children and young people, Walford will review its risks regularly and implement strategies to minimise and manage these risks.

When changes are made to the Child Safe Environment Policy, Walford will relodge its Compliance Statement with the SA Department of Human Services.

Legislative Context

[*Children and Young People \(Safety\) Act 2017*](#)

[*Child Safety \(Prohibited Persons\) Act 2016*](#)

[*Statutes Amendment \(Child Sexual Abuse\) Act 2021*](#)

[*Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 \(SA\)*](#)

[*Equal Opportunity Act 1984 \(SA\)*](#)

[*Sex Discrimination Act 1984 \(Cth\)*](#)

[*Teacher Registration and Standards Act 2004 \(SA\)*](#)

[*Education and Early Childhood Services \(Registration and Standards\) Act 2011\(SA\)*](#)

[*Education Act 2013 \(Cth\)*](#)

[*Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 \(including National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018\)*](#)

[*Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\)*](#)

Relevant Conventions

[*National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*](#)

[*The United Nations Conventions of the Rights of the Child*](#)

Relevant Standards and Frameworks

[Australian Student Wellbeing Framework](#)

[National Quality Framework](#)

[Safe & Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021 - 2031](#)

[Child Safe Organisations National Principles](#)

[Disability Standards for Education 2005](#)

[Homestay Standards](#)

Relevant Cross Sector Guidelines

[Protective Practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people](#)

[Managing allegations of sexual misconduct in SA education and care settings](#)

[Responding to problem sexual behaviour in children and young people](#)

[Suicide Postvention Guidelines](#)

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