



# Child Safe Program

## Child Safe Policy

### Introduction

"Canberra Montessori School is a Non-Denominational Independent School. Our values are rooted in fostering independence, promoting a love for learning, and nurturing a diverse and inclusive community. Through our commitment to personalized education and respect for each child's unique journey, we aim to create an environment where students can flourish academically, socially, and emotionally."

The school board approved the Child Safe Policy on 22-3-2022. It will be reviewed on 22-3-2025.

### Purpose

Our Child Safe Policy demonstrates the School's strong commitment to the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (National Principles) and to child safety.

It is an overarching policy that provides the key elements of our approach to the School as a child safe organisation, sets the tone for the School's entire Child Safe Program and outlines the policies and practices that we have developed to keep our students safe, including from abuse, neglect or other harm.

The Child Safe Policy provides the framework for:

- implementing the National Principles
- developing work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child protection, safety and wellbeing within the School creating a safe and supportive School environment and a

positive and robust child safe culture

- promoting, and open discussion of, child safety issues within the School
- compliance with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection and child safety in the ACT.

### Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing

All children and young people who come to Canberra Montessori School have a right to feel and be safe. We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. 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.

At Canberra Montessori School, we have a zero tolerance for child abuse, neglect and other harm and are committed to acting in students' best interests and keeping them safe from harm.

The School regards its child safe responsibilities with the utmost importance, and as such 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 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.

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

### Child Safe Principles

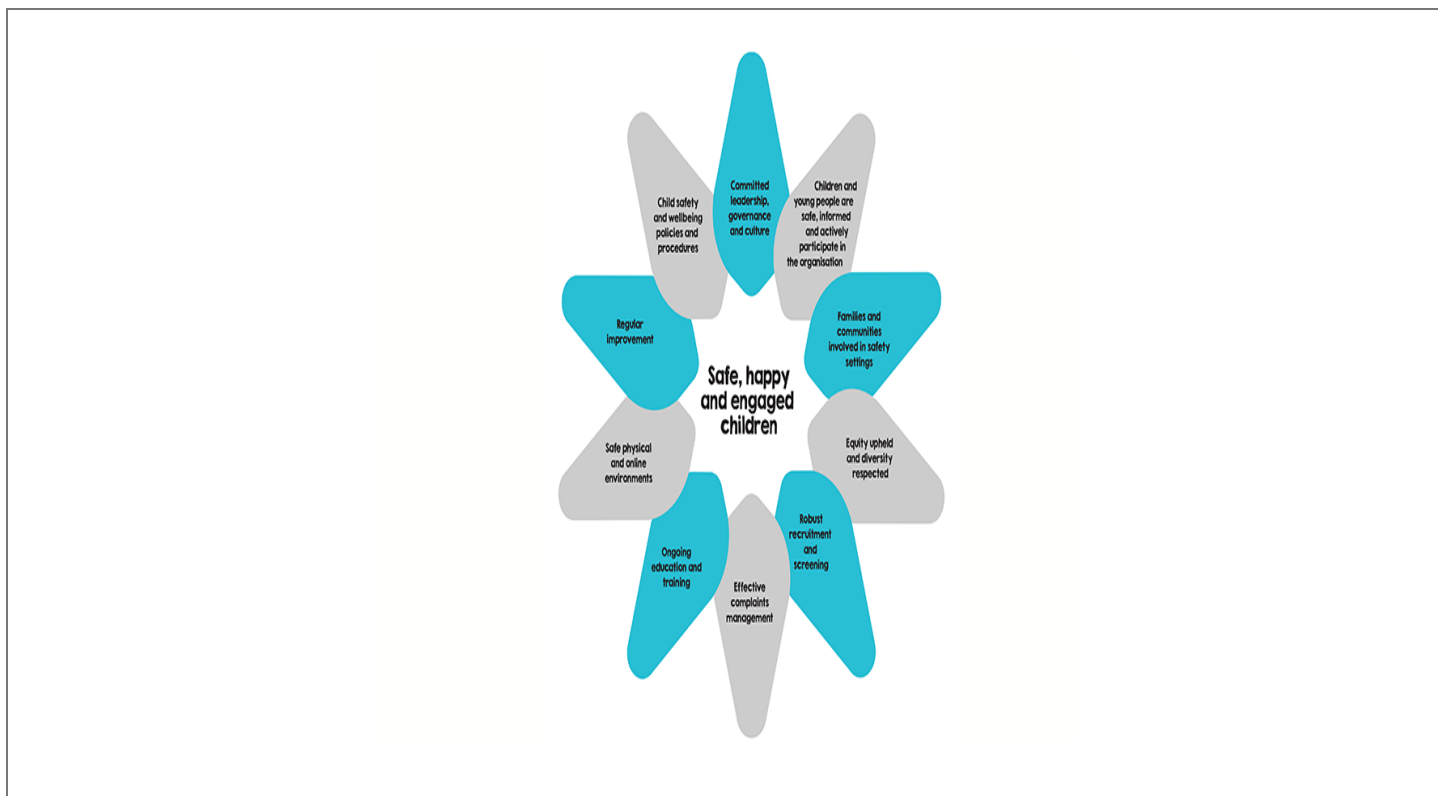
The School's commitment to child safety is based on the National Principles, which set out the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect students from abuse, neglect and other harm.

Requiring compliance with these Child Safe principles is one of the Canberra Montessori Society strategies to embed a culture of child safety at the School.

### *The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*

The 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:



## Scope

The School's Child Safe Policy applies to all adults in the School community, including Staff, Volunteers, Contractors, External Education Providers, parents/carers and other family members. This Policy applies in all School environments, both physical and online, and on-site and off-site School grounds (e.g. camps and excursions).

## Roles and Responsibilities

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

Of particular importance to this Policy are our Child Safe Officers. Additional roles and responsibilities are summarised in the **Procedures** section at the end of this Policy.

### The School's Child Safe Officers

One or more senior staff members are nominated as the School's Child Safe Officers.

Our Child Safe 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 safe within the School and assisting in coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

Our Child Safe Officers are:

Halima Khurram [principal@cms.act.edu.au](mailto:principal@cms.act.edu.au)

[Business.manager@cms.act.edu.au](mailto:Business.manager@cms.act.edu.au)

### The Senior Child Safe Officer

Canberra Montessori School has also appointed Halima Khurram as the School's Senior Child Safe Officer. They can be contacted by phone on 6287 1962 or by emailing [principal@cms.act.edu.au](mailto:principal@cms.act.edu.au).

The Senior Child Safe Officer has additional child safe responsibilities, such as being a first point of contact for all Child Safe concerns or queries for the wider community and coordinating the School's response to child safety incidents in consultation with the Business manager and The school board.

## **Canberra Montessori School's Policy**

### Child Safe Codes of Conduct

The School's Child Safe Codes of Conduct set boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults associated with the School and students, including in physical and online environments. Our Student Code of Conduct includes standards of behaviour for students relevant to child safe.

Our Child Safe Codes of Conduct include clear processes to report inappropriate behaviour. We publish our Child Safe 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 about the Child Safe Codes of Conduct, to ensure that they know what behaviours are acceptable and unacceptable and how to report inappropriate behaviour.

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

Canberra Montessori 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 classroom 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.

In particular, we:

- ensure that parents and carers participate in decisions affecting their children
- ensure that families and relevant communities know about the School's operations and policies, including its Child Safe Policy and the Child Safe Codes of Conduct, record keeping practices, risk management, and complaints and investigation processes
- actively seek to include families and relevant communities in decisions about organisational planning, delivery of services, management of facilities, and learning and assessment environments
- build cultural safety at the School through partnerships with relevant communities.

### Cultural Safety and 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 relevant Volunteers and Contractors have training about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, disability, culturally and 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 ensuring that our facilities promote the inclusion of students of all abilities.

### Child Safe Human Resources Management

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

#### *Recruitment and Screening*

The School applies best practice standards to engage the most suitable and appropriate people to work with our students. Our practices include:

- making our commitment to child safe clear in recruitment advertising and documentation
- requiring all Staff and relevant Volunteers and Contractors to maintain a valid Working with Vulnerable People Registration
- using additional selection criteria, background checking and screening processes for all Staff and for relevant Volunteers and Contractors that take into account child safe.

#### *Training On and Information About the Child Safe Program*

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

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

Our child safe induction and ongoing training programs include information about:

- this Child Safe Policy
- the Child Safe Codes of Conduct
- recognising child abuse, neglect 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 (both internally and to external authorities) all child safety incidents and concerns
- our policies and procedures for information sharing and record keeping about child safe incidents and concerns
- Working with Vulnerable People Registrations, and other child safe human resources practices.

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.

### Ongoing Supervision, Management and Support

The School's Child Safe Officers, Business manager and/or an appointed Supervisor provides supervision and support to all Staff, Direct Contact Volunteers, and Direct Contact Contractors to ensure that they are compliant with the School's approach to child safety.

Our child safe supervision and support program includes:

- probationary periods for new staff members, where these are permitted by law or under an Enterprise Agreement
- annual performance reviews for all staff members
- appointing a supervising staff member to relevant Volunteers and Contractors
- professional development programs for Staff that include child safe education.

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

Canberra Montessori School fosters a culture that encourages everyone in the School community to raise concerns and complaints about child safe. We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns set out in the **Procedures** below and in our Complaints Handling Policy.

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 Child Safe Program.

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 when investigating and responding to child safety incidents and concerns.

The School's response will include:

- reporting all matters that meet the required relevant thresholds externally to Child and Youth Protection Services (CYPS) (Mandatory Reports and Voluntary Reports), Police (the Failure to Report offence), the ACT Ombudsman (Reportable Conduct) and/or the ACT Teacher Quality Institute (Teacher Misconduct), 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 by 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 Safe Risk Management

Canberra Montessori School recognises the importance of a risk management approach to minimising the risk of harm to children and young people in all School environments, without compromising their rights to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities. The School's Child Safe Risk Management Strategy can be found [here](#).

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

### Child Safe Record Keeping

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



The School records all internal and external reports of child safety incidents and concerns, as well as any other responses by the School.

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 Safe Program and Practice Review

Canberra Montessori School is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Safe Program. 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 protection and child safety 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 complaints, concerns and child safety incidents that may have occurred
- communicates any adjustments or amendments to policy and practice widely throughout the School community.

## **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 notify CYPs if they believe or suspect that a child or young person is being or is at risk of being abused or neglected (Voluntary Reports).*** To make a Voluntary Report:

- complete an online Child Concern Report; or
- contact CYPs on 1300 556 729.

### *Staff, Volunteers and Contractors*

All Staff, and relevant Volunteers and Contractors, 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 Safe Officer or the Principal. Where the child safety incident or concerns involves

the Principal, internal reports should instead be made to the Board Chair by [principal@cms.act.edu.au](mailto:principal@cms.act.edu.au).

We recognise that some children and young people face additional vulnerabilities to child abuse, neglect and other harm, as well as additional barriers to disclosing child safety incidents or concerns. Our Child Safe 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** 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 a School Child Safe Officer
- disclose the child safety incident or concern to any other 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 Suggestion box, which is located Front office to disclose anonymously
- contact Kids Help Line.

**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 Safe Officer, by phoning 6287 1962 or emailing [principal@cms.act.edu.au](mailto:principal@cms.act.edu.au)
- the Insert Terminology Used for the Boarding School e.g. Boarding School; Boarding House's Boarding School Senior Child Protection Officer by Insert Contact Details
- if the concern relates to the Principal, the Board Chair by [principal@cms.act.edu.au](mailto:principal@cms.act.edu.au).

**Any person** can also contact the Principal, the Boarding School Senior Child Protection Officer or the Board Chair if they have concerns regarding the School's or the Insert Terminology Used for the Boarding School e.g. Boarding School; Boarding House'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 Safe Program sets out the policies, procedures and practices that the School will follow for any child safety incident or concern involving a student, 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 for students, parents/carers and the community in our 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 the School.

The School employs 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 Safe 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 Class Director, 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 Safe: Our Child Safe Program

Our Child Safe Program itself is one of the strategies employed by Canberra Montessori School to embed a culture of child safety at the School.

Our Child Safe Program relates to all aspects of child safety and protecting students from abuse, neglect 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 Safe Codes of Conduct
- clear information as to what is child abuse, neglect and other harm and associated key indicators of abuse, neglect or other harm
- clear procedures for responding to and reporting child safety incidents or concerns internally, and for responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse, neglect 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 Business manager, Staff, Volunteers and Contractors
- procedures for reporting to external agencies, including Mandatory Reporting to CYPS, reporting Reportable Conduct to the ACT Ombudsman, 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 linguistically diverse backgrounds and students with disability
- child safe training
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse, neglect 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 National Principles)
- a system for continuous review and improvement.

## Additional Responsibilities for Child Safe at the School

### *The school board*

The school board is the School's governing body.

The school board approves and reviews the School's child safe policies and procedures required for registration as a non-government school, ensures that the School has and implements processes to comply with its child safety legal and regulatory obligations, and ensures that the School has appropriate resources to effectively implement the National Principles and our Child Safe Program.

### *The Canberra Montessori Society Board's Principal*

One member of the Canberra Montessori Society Board is appointed or identified as a Principal. The Principal is responsible for ensuring that a child safe culture is prioritised, modelled and championed at the Canberra Montessori Society Board level of the School. The Principal drives the Canberra Montessori Society Board's child safe responsibilities by ensuring that the Canberra Montessori Society Board meets those responsibilities.

At Canberra Montessori School, our Canberra Montessori Society Board's Principal is Halima Khurram.

### *Canberra Montessori Society*

Canberra Montessori Society is the proprietor of the School and is responsible for implementing the governance arrangements set out for the School by The school board, including in relation to child safe.

### *The Principal*

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

### *The Business manager*

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

### *Staff*

All Staff must comply with our Child Safe Policy and Child Safe Codes of Conduct, be familiar with our Child Safe Program and understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child

abuse, neglect and other harm, and Working with Vulnerable People Registrations.

All Staff must be aware of key indicators of abuse, neglect and other harm, be observant, and raise all child safety incidents and concerns with a School Child Safe Officer.

To meet these obligations, all Staff must:

- participate in child safe induction and ongoing training provided by the School
- always follow the School's child safe policies and procedures in the Child Safe Program
- act in accordance with the Child Safe Codes of Conduct
- identify, respond to and report child safety incidents and concerns in accordance with our Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns Policies and Procedures
- ensure that 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
- comply with all relevant child safe-related human resources policies and procedures.

### *Volunteers and Contractors*

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

To meet these obligations:

- all Volunteers and Contractors must:
  - comply with our Child Safe Policy and the Child Safe Codes of Conduct
  - understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse, neglect and other harm
  - raise all child safety concerns with a Child Safe Officer
  - comply with all relevant child safe-related human resources policies and procedures
- certain Volunteers and Contractors (those who are so required by the School) must:
  - either participate in child safe induction and ongoing training provided by the School or receive and acknowledge information about the Child Safe Policy and the Child Safe Code of Conduct
  - identify and respond to child safety incidents and concerns in accordance with our Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns Policies and Procedures.

For Contractors, the School may include these requirements in the written agreement between it and the Contractor.

## Implementation

The Child Safe Policy is published on our 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 Safe Code of Conduct and how to report child safety incidents or concerns to the School and to relevant external authorities).

A child-friendly version of the Child Safe Policy and our Statement of Commitment to Child Safety is provided to all students and can be found At the front office and on the school website.

## Consequences for Breaching the Child Safe Policy

Canberra Montessori School enforces this Child Safe Policy and our Child Safe 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.

## Definitions

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

Of particular relevance to this Policy are the following additional key definitions:

Term	Definition
Child Safe Program	The Child Safe 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 National Principles. It includes policies and procedures for:

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

### Source of Obligation

- Education Regulation 2005 (ACT), Schedule 2
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

### Related Policies

- [Child Safe Codes of Conduct](#)
- [Child Safe Complaints Management](#)
- [Regular Reviews and Continuous Improvement](#)

Insert Related Policies and Procedures

### Related Forms and Documents

There are no applicable documents for this Policy.

### Policy Administration



A review of the Child Safe Policy occurs Insert Review Frequency (e.g. annually) or earlier if required, such as due to changes in legislation.

Insert Policy Control/Administration Information