**Child Safety Policy**

All children have a right to be treated fairly. This right was referred to by the Prophet (s.a.w) in the saheeh hadeeth:

# “Fear Allah and treat your children fairly”

**(Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 2447; Muslim, 1623).**

**1.0 Statement of Context & Purpose**

**Al-Taqwa College child safety statement:**

This statement demonstrates Al-Taqwa College's strong commitment to child safety and is committed to fulfilling its duty to all students in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359. At Al-Taqwa College we are committed to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly school, where children and young people are safe and feel safe. Our aim is to ensure all students feel safe, happy and are empowered as we support and respect all members of the College community.

This includes the safety and wellbeing of our students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait children and vulnerable children. All members of our College Community have a responsibility to care for children and young people, to positively promote their wellbeing and protect them from any kind of harm or abuse.,

**Purpose**

The Al-Taqwa College Child Safety Policy demonstrates our school’s commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of our College’s approach to implementing [Ministerial Order](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/Ministerial_Order.pdf) 1359 which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

It informs our College community of everyone’s obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

**2.0 Target Audience**

**•** Applies to all school staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to school board members where indicated.

• Applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided by for a student’s use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers

• Should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related school policies section below.

**Definitions**

The following terms in this policy have [specific definitions](https://www.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards-definitions) :

**•** Child

• Child safety

• Child abuse

• Child-connected work

• Child-related work

• School environment

• School boarding environment

• School staff

• School boarding premises staff

• School governing authority

• School boarding premises governing authority

• Student

• Volunteer.

**Statement of commitment to child safety**

Al-Taqwa College is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families.

We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our school environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism, are not tolerated at our school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our school has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child’s safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

**Roles and responsibilities - School leadership team**

Our College leadership team is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

The Principals and Vice Principal will:

• Ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed

• Model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing

• Enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered

• Reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students

• Promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the College community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and school board meetings

• Facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of responding to abuse

• Create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

**School staff and volunteers**

All staff and volunteers will:

• Participate in a child safety and wellbeing induction, as well as training provided by the school and always follow the College’s child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures

• Act in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct Policy.

• Identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our mandatory reporting policy, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/report.aspx).

• Ensure students’ views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives

• Implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

**College Board**

In performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, College board members will:

• Champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community

• Ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school board meetings

• Undertake annual training on child safety

• Approve updates to, and act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to College Board employees and members

• When hiring school council employees, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe

**Specific staff child safety responsibilities**

Al-Taqwa College has nominated a child safety committee, as well as a child safety champions to support the Principal to implement our child safety policies and practices, including promoting a child safe culture with all staff and volunteer.

The responsibilities of the child safety champions are outlines in the [Guidance for child safety](https://www.vic.gov.au/guidance-child-safety-champions) champions.

The College Principal, Vice Principal, Child Safety Committee, Head of Primary and Heads of Secondary are the first points of contact for child safety concerns or quires, and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

• The College Principal is responsible for monitoring the school’s compliance with the Child Safety Policy. Anyone in our College community should approach the College’s Parent Liaison Officer if they have any concerns about the College’s compliance with the Child Safety Policy.

• The college’s Child Safety Committee is responsible for informing the College community about this policy and making it publicly available.

• Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct and the Mandatory Reporting policy

As well as the Child Safety Committee, our College has established a Student Reference Group on child safety. While the Child Safety Committee meet regularly to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety. The Student Reference Group provides an opportunity for the students to provide input into school strategies. Our Risk Management Committee monitors the Child Safety Risk Register.

**Child Safety Code of Conduct**

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments. We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school. The Child Safety Code of Conduct also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

**Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing**

At our school we identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site overnight camps, adventure activities and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our school leadership team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register annually.

Below are some examples of how Al-Taqwa College promotes Child safety and manages risk in physical and online environments:

- Al-Taqwa College has adopted a zero-tolerance position on bullying.

- Al-Taqwa College will combat bullying by providing a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment.

- Anti-bullying messages and posters will be displayed around the College.

- Ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not alone with a child.

- Reporting any allegations of child abuse to the College’s leadership, child safety committee or parent/community engagement officers.

- Adequate supervision of students in the school yard and car park is a requirement of the

College’s duty of care.

-Supervision of students in the school yard/ playground / car park begins at 8:00 am until 8:50 am and from 3:20pm until 3:45pm.

**Establishing a culturally safe environment**

At Al-Taqwa College, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety.

Al-Taqwa College has developed a variety of policies and strategies to promote cultural safety in the school community. Among them are:

• Discrimination, Harassment and bullying policy

• Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Plan outlines the measures we have in place to maintain an inclusive and culturally safe school for Aboriginal children and students

**Student empowerment**

To support child safety and wellbeing, Al-Taqwa College works to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Through the implementation of our school values, we reinforce respectful relationships between students and encourage strong friendships and peer support. Among our school values are:

• Respect – showing care and concern for other people and property

• Trust – instilling confidence that each person doing their part – trust in our teachers, trust in our programs

• Tolerance – understanding and celebrating diversity and individual differences

• Caring – encouraging the development of empathy

We continually remind students of these values through, visual representations displayed around the College, school assemblies and ongoing classroom discussions.

**Family engagement**

Our families and the school community have an important role in monitoring and promoting

children’s safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement at Al-Taqwa College, we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school’s child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

We do this by:

• Communicating through the College website, school newsletter, child safety school box page and parent seminars.

• All of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents at <https://al-taqwa.vic.edu.au/for-parents/policies/> as well as on the [College’s Child Safety](https://schoolbox.wicv.net/homepage/34441/) [Schoolbox](https://schoolbox.wicv.net/homepage/34441/) .

• Newsletters and the child safety school box page will inform families and the school community about any important updates to our child safety policies or process, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.

• PROTECT child safety posters, and the college’s child safety reporting process (flowchart) are displayed across our school, including in all classrooms, staffrooms the front office and on the child safety school box.

**Diversity and Inclusion**

As a child safe organization, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognize that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

* Aboriginal children and young people
* children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
* children and young people with disabilities
* children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
* international students
* and all other needs

Our Student Wellbeing policy (Behavior Management Guidelines) provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

**Suitable staff and volunteers**

At Al-Taqwa College, we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

**Staff recruitment**

When recruiting staff, we:

* follow procedures to ensure only suitable people work with children are hired
* supervise staff and volunteers to ensure they priorities the safety of children
* support staff and volunteers to understand their responsibilities.

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:

* sight, verify and record the person’s Working with Children clearance or equivalent

background check such as a Victorian teaching registration

* collect and record:
	+ proof of the person’s identity and any professional or other qualifications
	+ the person’s history of working with children
	+ references that address suitability for the job and working with children.
* The College gathers copies of all records prior to engaging to child-connected work. Records are verified by checking the relevant regulatory bodies database (for example, VIT, AHPRA)
* The College collects the following types of evidence:
	+ Copy of resume and Qualification
	+ Copy of VIT and/or WWC card
	+ Photo ID (Driver License or Current passport)
	+ Conduct thorough reference checks on a person’s history of work involving children

**Staff induction**

All newly appointed staff will be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program will include a focus on:

* The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document)
* The Child Safety Code of Conduct
* The Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures and any other child safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

 **Ongoing supervision and management of staff**

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behavior towards children is safe and appropriate.

Staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. Annual performance appraisals are conducted by managers and employee’s Inappropriate behavior towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our College and department policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

**Suitability of volunteers**

All volunteers are required to comply with our Visitors and Volunteer Policy which describes how we assess the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing induction and training, and supervision and management.

**Child safety knowledge, skills and awareness**

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our staff will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Staff child safety training is delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

* Our school’s child safety policies, procedures, codes, and practices
* Completing the [Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](http://elearn.com.au/det/protectingchildren/) online module annually
* Recognizing indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
* Responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
* How to build culturally safe environments for children and students
* Information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
* How to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment. Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing, for example, training for our volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

**College board training and education**

* To ensure our College board is equipped with the knowledge required to make decisions in the best interests of student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety risks in our school environment, the board is trained annually. Training includes guidance on:
* Individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse
* Child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment
* Al-Taqwa College child safety policies, procedures, codes and practices

**Complaints and reporting processes**

Al-Taqwa College fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our school’s Grievances Policy. The Grievances policy can be found on the College website.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers must follow our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligation Policy and Procedures. Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school.

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, we will ensure our school follows:

* The [Four Critical Actions](https://www.schools.vic.gov.au/report-child-abuse-schools#four-critical-actions)  for complaints and concerns relating to adult behavior towards a child
* The [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](https://www.schools.vic.gov.au/identify-and-respond-student-sexual-offending?Redirect=1)  for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending
* Our Student Behavior Management Guidelines, cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviors.

**Communications**

Al-Taqwa College is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

* Ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on our website including the Child Safety Policy (this document), Child Safety Code of Conduct, the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and the Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedure
* Displaying around the school
* Updates in our school newsletter and the child safety schoolbox page
* Ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and school board meetings.

**Privacy and information sharing**

* Al-Taqwa College collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws. For information on how our school collects, uses and discloses information refer to Privacy Policy. The policy can be found on the College website.

**Records management**

* We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the Department of Education and Training’s policy: Records Management – School Records.

**Review of child safety practices**

At Al-Taqwa College, we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

* Review and improve our policy annually or after any significant child safety incident
* Analyze any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice
* Act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community.

**Related policies and procedures**

This Child Safety Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related school policies, procedures, and codes. These include our:

* Child Safety Code of Conduct
* Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
* Mandatory Reporting Policy
* Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy
* Complaints Policy
* Visitors and Volunteers Policy
* Behavior Management Guidelines
* Privacy Policy

**4.0 Resources**

[Child Safe Standards](https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/the-11-child-safe-standards/)

[Reportable Conduct Schem](https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/resources/reportable-conduct-scheme/reportable-conduct-scheme-information-sheets/#TOC-1)e

[Child Information Sharing](https://www.vic.gov.au/child-information-sharing-scheme)

**5.0 Appendices**

**Appendix 1: Guidance for Child safety champions**

**Appendix 2: Four critical actions**

**Appendix 3: Four critical actions for Sexual abuse**

**5.1 Help for Non-English Speakers**

If you require assistance in understanding this policy, please contact Al-Taqwa College (03) 9269 5000.