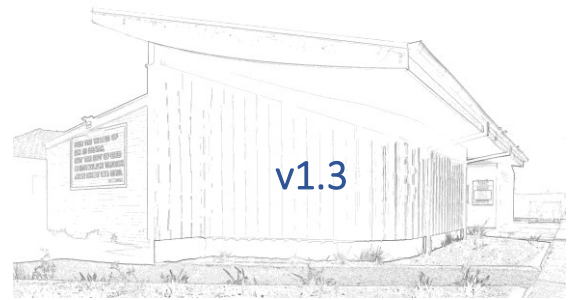


South Oakleigh Gospel Hall Child Safe Policy



Our Commitment to child safety

Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. (Mat 18:10)

South Oakleigh Gospel Hall assembly is committed to child safety.

- We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our members.
- We are committed to the participation and engagement of all children.
- We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are concerned about a child's safety.
- We commit to identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- We commit to regularly training and educating our members on child abuse risks.
- We are committed to children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

Our Children

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. (Pro 22:6)

All children's work is with a view to children understanding the protection afforded to them while they learn God's truth of salvation. This policy is intended to engage children who are vital and active participants at South Oakleigh Gospel Hall. We engage them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them.

We encourage tolerance in our assembly. People of all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the safety of children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally

Our members and visitors

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15)

We support and respect our workers. This policy guides our members on how to behave with children in our assembly and reduce risk to themselves and the assembly.

All of our workers must agree to abide by our **Code of Conduct** which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All members, as well as children, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the **Code of Conduct**.

Only Visitors who carry a letter of commendation from their home assembly with two signatories will be permitted to engage in children's work.

Training and supervision

And let these also first be proved; then let them serve, being found blameless. (1 Timothy 3:10)

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our assembly understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our assembly aims for all workers and visitors (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our workers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our workers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse including the safety of children with a disability.

New workers and visitors will be supervised to ensure they understand South Oakleigh Gospel Hall's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to this assembly's **Code of Conduct** to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Engagement in the Work

And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: (Ephesians 4:11-12)

We take all reasonable steps to use gifted or suited people to work with children. Our selection criteria will clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. South Oakleigh Gospel Hall understands that when engaging believers for the work we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

All people engaged in child-related work, are required to hold a **Working with Children Check** and to provide evidence of this Check. Visiting speakers will have a worker present.

Please see the Working with Children Check website www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au for further information.

Fair procedures for volunteers

I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure. (1 Timothy 5:21,22)

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough and not partial or hasty. Our **Code of Conduct** also safeguards members and visitors from compromising situations and potential accusations.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our **Incident Reporting Form**, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an assembly take.

Privacy

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven ... A time to weep, ... a time to mourn ... a time to keep silence (Ecclesiastes 3:1,4,7)

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be workers, visitors, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative responsibilities

Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. (Daniel 6:4)

South Oakleigh Gospel Hall takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.¹
- **Failure to protect:** People with responsibility in our assembly will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.²
- Those within the assembly who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.³

Risk management

... that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed. (1 Timothy 6:1)

... that the word of God be not blasphemed. (Titus 2:5)

The assembly is required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

¹ A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed. Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website

Link correct as of October 2021: <<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-disclose-offence>>

² Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website.

Link correct as of October 2021: <<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-protect-a-new-criminal-offence-to>>

³ Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

Revision History

1.0 December 2018

1.1 January 2019 — standardising references to “members” and “visitors”. Removing abbreviations of scripture references. Updating link to “Betrayal of Trust” fact sheet.

1.2 October 2021 — Removed highlighting and updated links to external websites.

1.3 January 2024 — Improved readability and removed repetition. Updated a reference to “personnel” to “volunteers” on page 3. Added Revision History.