



## ***CHILD SAFE POLICY***

### ***Rationale:***

This school has a commitment to zero tolerance of child abuse. We support and respect all children as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability. We want children at this school to be safe, happy and empowered. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

### ***Purpose:***

- To ensure all children feel safe and supported at school.
- To prevent child abuse by identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- To ensure that processes and procedures are in place to protect children from child abuse.
- To ensure that all staff (including contractors), volunteers, visitors to the school and parents/carers, understand the school's child safety guidelines and how to behave appropriately with and towards children.
- To comply with Ministerial Order No. 870 and the Child Safety Standards
- To comply with reporting obligations under child protection law and criminal law.

### ***Guidelines:***

- The school's core values of respect, responsibility, teamwork and learning underpin our commitment to child safety and the Child Safety Standards.
- All of our staff (including contractors and volunteers) must agree to abide by the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.
- The school has specific policies, procedures and training in place to support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve our commitments.
- Child safety is a consideration in the recruitment, selection and management of staff (including contractors and volunteers).
- The school undertakes regular training and education of staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- The school has procedures in place to enable all staff and volunteers as well as parents/carers and children, to raise any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.
- This policy covers all school environments both during and outside of school hours, including any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the School Council or the Principal.

### **Definitions:**

#### **School staff means:**

An individual working in a school environment who is:

- Employed under Part 2.4 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (ERT Act) in the government teaching service or
- Employed under a contract of service by the school council under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act or
- A volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)

School environment includes:

- (a) All on site locations both indoors and outdoors
- (b) All other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events as well as bus travel)
- (c) Online school environments (including email and intranet systems).

Child means a child enrolled as a student at the school

Child connected work means work authorised by the governing school authority (the Principal) and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present

Child abuse includes:

- (a) Any act committed against a child involving –
  - (i) A sexual offense or
  - (ii) An offense under section 49B of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
- (b) The infliction on a child of –
  - (i) Physical violence; or
  - (ii) Serious emotional or psychological harm
  - (iii) Serious neglect of a child

Child Safety Officer is a person at this school who has knowledge of child safety issues, and could be a point of for others who have questions or concerns or want to report an allegation of child abuse.

## ***Implementation:***

### **Our Children:**

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants at this school. We will involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance at this school, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

### **Recruitment:**

We take reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. When recruiting staff and volunteers we are aware that we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

#### Legal obligations:

- All people engaged in child-connected work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this check.
- When employing staff undertake reference checks and police record checks/Working with Children Checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people.
- All teachers employed at this school must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

#### Staff and Volunteers:

This policy as well as our Child Safety Code of Conduct guides the school's staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation. All staff and volunteers must agree to the Child Safety Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

#### **Training and Supervision:**

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our school understands that child is everyone's responsibility. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to:

- Develop their skills to protect children from abuse
- Promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly. This is to ensure they understand the school's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse. It is also for the purpose of checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate with reference to the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct.

The school has protocols and procedures in place to enable all staff and volunteers as well as parents/carers and children, to raise any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported depending on the severity and urgency of the matter through appropriate channels which may include:

- The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) – Child Protection
- Victoria Police

#### Fair Procedures for Personnel:

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, transparent, and based upon evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using the forms:

1. Child Safety Incident Report form and/or
2. DHHS Child Protection/Police/Child FIRST Report form
3. 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 organisation take.

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. The school has 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 access to it.

Legislative responsibilities: - This school takes its 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 police.
- Failure to protect: A person in a position of authority in an organisation will commit this offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

### **Risk Management:**

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, this school proactively manages risks of abuse to children by removing and reducing these risks and follows the Child Safety Standards.

The school has risk management strategies to identify, assess and take steps to minimise child abuse risks which include risks posed by physical environments (for example doors that can lock) and online environments (for example no staff member or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).

The school's risk management includes:

- The Child Safety Code of Conduct – outlines acceptable and unacceptable behaviour with respect to child safety and child abuse. The Child Safety Code of Conduct is publically available.
- Child Safety Officer
- Screening as part of the staff recruitment process
- Sign in processes at the school office
- Working With Children checks, Police Record checks, reference checks
- On and off site supervision of children during recess and lunch breaks as well 15 minutes before and after school – all staff carry mobile phones
- Internet Code of Conduct for students
- Teacher supervision of student internet usage and authorisation of the upload of material
- Protocols to ensure children do not move around the school individually during class time
- Out of bounds areas in the school to ensure that children are not placed at risk
- Staff and volunteer training

### **Allegations, Concerns and Complaints:**

Our school culture aims for all staff and volunteers as well as parents/carers and children to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

We are aware that some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers reporting allegations of abuse or that for some communication in English may be a barrier.

We will endeavour to be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible.

If an allegation of abuse involves an Aboriginal child, we will endeavour to ensure a culturally appropriate response.

### **Child Abuse – 4 Critical Actions:**

1. **This school takes all allegations seriously** and has practices in place to respond quickly and thoroughly. Our staff have been trained to deal appropriately with allegations, as well as how to support or assist children who disclose child abuse or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse. In such situations the school will follow actions outlined in the school's action plan 'Child Abuse – 4 Critical Actions'.
2. **First and foremost, we will ensure that children are safe from harm** after which we will follow the procedures outlined in this document. This process includes making appropriate reports, following up and ensuring that children and any others involved receive appropriate support.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour. Such issues can be reported to:

- The Principal
- The Child Safety Officer
- Teachers at the school

This can be done verbally. Additionally the school's **Child Safety Incident Report CS1** should be completed and/or **DHHS Child Protection/Police/Child FIRST Report CS2**. All information is considered confidential and written reports will be held securely.

3. **We all have a responsibility** to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about **failure to disclose**).

4. **If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident.**

Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- A child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- Behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim, is observed
- Someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- Observing suspicious behaviour

**Regular Review:**

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur.

***Other policies which underpin this policy:***

- Behaviour Management Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Excursion Policy
- Health Policy
- Incursion and Excursion Policy – when learning with an external provider
- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- On-Site Supervision of Students Policy
- School Camp Policy
- Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy
- Student Welfare Policy

October 20<sup>th</sup> 2016

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