



CHILD SAFE POLICY

Latest Information: Late July 2016

First Developed in This Format: August 2016

Rationale

The child safe standards require organisations including schools that provide services for children to have a child safe policy or a statement of commitment to child safety.

A child safe policy is an overarching document that provides an overview of the key elements of an organisation's approach to child safety. It should:

- clearly state the organisation's zero tolerance of child abuse
- detail the organisation's child safe processes and procedures, or link to existing documents that include child safety considerations - for example, its reporting procedures (including leadership responsibilities), how to respond to an allegation of child abuse, human resources and recruitment practices, and risk management strategy and procedures
- clearly state the organisation's commitment to cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability
- detail expectations and requirements of staff and volunteers to ensure the protection of children, and the training and support staff receive
- include contact details for people to access information in relation to child safety, such as the Child Safety Officer. A Child Safety Officer or Student Welfare Officer is a person in the organisation who has knowledge of child safety issues, and could be a point of contact for others who have questions or concerns or want to report an allegation of child abuse. The organisation may consider including child safety officer/champion duties in the person's job description
- include how and when the policy and other child safety tools are reviewed to help the organisation improve.

The school recognises that this policy is one of seven standards relating to the school's child safe culture. The school further recognises that a child safe culture will not develop in the short term.

Purpose

- To ensure Bourchier Street Primary School complies with the legislative requirements of MO 870.
- To ensure the school demonstrates its commitment to creating a child safe culture.
- To clearly demonstrate our commitment to creating and maintaining a safe environment.
- To outline the measures we have implemented as well as our mission and objectives in regards to child safety.
- To raise awareness within the school community of the importance of child safety.
- To empower children who are key stakeholders within our organisation.
- To ensure the school develops and publishes a child safe policy that is compliant with the Child Safe Standard 2.
- To ensure the school discharges its duty of care towards children.

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy we will define child abuse as any act committed against a child involving:

- a sexual offence
- befriending or forming an emotional connection with the child with the intent of lowering inhibitions to perform abuse (grooming)
- physical violence
- serious emotional or psychological harm
- serious neglect of a child
- family violence

Implementation

- Bouchier Street Primary School is committed to providing a safe environment (both physical and online) for all the children in its care, including children with a disability, aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and diverse backgrounds. To ensure children have every opportunity to grow into happy, respectful citizens we have a **zero tolerance of any form of child abuse**. This zero tolerance approach includes extensive safeguards and protections to ensure our school is free from the conditions under which child abuse could occur. This policy, in conjunction with other relevant policies outlines our mission and objectives in regards to child safety and the measures we will include to ensure that all students are in a safe environment.
- The school is committed acting in children's best interests.
- The safety and wellbeing of children at this school is our highest priority.
- Our school has designated an Assistant Principal position to Student wellbeing and our Child Safe strategy.
- We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff, volunteers and the parent community.
- We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children if applicable, to the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.
- 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 report all allegations of child abuse. All our staff are trained in departmental mandatory reporting requirements and this works in conjunction with our child safe policy.
- We have an obligation to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- Any staff member who believes that a child is at immediate risk of abuse must phone 000.
- Our school is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- Our school has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- Our school is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks. Ongoing training will be provided to all staff to explain how to identify and eliminate these risks.
- Our recruiting practices include explicit references to our child safe policy and practices and provides essential information for all staff. This will include new staff being provided with copies of relevant policies and information being provided in all induction processes.
- We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.
- The school's *Child Safe Policy* will be publicly available to help raise awareness about the importance of child safety in our organisation and demonstrate our commitment to protecting children from abuse.
- It will be published on the school's website and provided to new families on enrolment.
- New staff will be provided with a copy and briefed on the school's attitude to child safety as part of the induction process.
- We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute to the development and review of this policy. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.
- The overall responsibility of implementation of the child safe policy rests with the Principal. Additional roles and responsibilities are outlined in the relevant related policies listed in the risk management section of this policy.
- The adherence to our child safe policy will be monitored by the Principal and Leadership Team and discussed as a standing item in Leadership and School Council meetings.
- The school will support children who disclose child abuse and ensure the immediate safety of these children.

- The school will ensure that procedures for raising and managing complaints and consequences for breaching of the Child Safe Code of Conduct, are known and understood by everyone. For specific procedures, please refer to the school's *Complaints & Concerns, Parents Policy*.

Our Children

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

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

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children (if applicable)
- 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 in all aspects of school life

All children have the right to:

- feel and be safe in a supportive environment
- be treated fairly with respect, kindness and courtesy
- be able to learn without disruption
- be valued for their individuality including race, gender, cultural, physical or intellectual

For full details, please refer to Child Safe Standard 3.

Child Safe Code of Conduct

Acceptable Behaviour

All staff, volunteers and School Council members are responsible for supporting the safety of children. They must:

- adhere to Bouchier Street's *Child Safe Policy* and uphold the school's statement of commitment to child safety at all times
- take all reasonable steps to protect children (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait islanders, children with a disability and children with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds) from abuse.
- any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns need to be reported to the school's Principal or Assistant Principals. In the event that these people are unavailable all child safety concerns must be reported to administration office immediately
- maintain objectivity in their relationship with all children
- act with professional integrity
- treat everyone in the school community with respect
- listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly allegations of a serious nature
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promote the safety of children with a disability
- promote the safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- ensure as far as practicable that adults are not alone with children
- report any concerns about staff/volunteer conduct to the Principal immediately
- understand and comply with our Mandatory Reporting policy.

Unacceptable Behaviour

All staff and volunteers must not:

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse

- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (e.g. inappropriate sitting on laps)
- put children at risk of abuse (e.g. by locking doors)
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves such as toileting or changing clothes
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- discriminate against any child, because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability
- have any online contact with a child (including social media, email, instant messaging etc.) or their family, unless necessary e.g. providing families with e.newsletters or assisting students with their school work
- photograph or video a child without consent
- work with children whilst under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs

Any unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with seriously and legal authorities will be notified if necessary. For full details, please refer to Child Safe Standard 3.

Our Staff and Volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with the children in our school.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by the school's Child Safe Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

The signature of the staff members, volunteers and families attesting to having read, understood and agreeing to abide by will formalise the Code of Conduct and raise its profile within the school and the community.

All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Child Safe Code of Conduct.

Training and Supervision

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

Our school culture aims for all staff and volunteers (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 staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse, to 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 inducted into the school and supervised regularly to ensure they understand our philosophy 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. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through the Principal or Assistant Principal or directly to the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

The school takes all 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. Our school understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers 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.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check.

Fair Procedures for Personnel

Whilst the safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern, we also are fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

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 families (as appropriate) on progress and any actions we take.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they are staff, volunteers, 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

The 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 the police.

Failure to protect: People of authority 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.

All teachers are **mandatory reporters** and must comply with their responsibilities.

Non-teaching staff have an obligation to report if they form a reasonable belief that a child is at risk of harm.

Risk Management

In Victoria, organisations are 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.

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

Risk analysis always forms part of our preparation for school camps and some excursions. The analysis will now include possible potential for child abuse. The school's Incursions (*Safety of Children Working with External Providers*) Policy and the *Safety of Children Learning Off-Site with External Providers* already have strategies to minimise the risk of abuse.

Bourchier Street Primary School considers any breach of this or other relevant policies a child safety risk and will respond to it accordingly. Staff has a responsibility to report any suspected breaches to the Principal or delegate immediately.

To identify, assess, manage and minimise child safety risks, Bourchier Street Primary School has a number of risk management strategies in place. These include:

- *Mandatory Reporting Policy*
- *Student Engagement Policy*
- *Duty of care Policy*
- *Internet and email Policy*
- *Bullying & Harassment Policy*

- The school will know it has successfully implemented Standard 2 when:

- the school has a child safe policy approved by the School Council
- the school has made public their commitment to child safety
- all School Council members, staff and volunteers are aware of the school's commitment to child safety and their duty of care requirements
- all staff and volunteers can easily access and understand the school's commitment to child safety
- the school's commitment to child safety includes a commitment to the safety of Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability.
- Please refer also to the school's existing policies all of which are designed to create a safe environment for children:

Anti-Discrimination
Contractor Management
Emergency & Incident Reporting
Incursions (Safety of Children Working with External Providers)
Internet & Social Media
Mobile Phones, Student Use
Police & DHHS Interviews
Staff Code of Conduct
Visitors to the School
Wellbeing & Learning

Working with Children Checks – Staff
School Hours

Bullying & Harassment
Discipline, Student (Overview)
Employment Policy
Information Privacy

Mandatory Reporting
Photographing & Filming Students
Risk Management
Student Engagement
Volunteer Workers
Working with Children Checks – Volunteers
Yard Duty/On-Site Supervision
Medical Emergencies

Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle, if an incident occurs or if guidelines change (latest information July 2016).

This update was ratified by School Council in August 2016

References:
 VRQA Child Safe Standards Toolkit
 Creating a Child Safe Organisation Guide p.22
 An Overview of the Victorian Child Safe Standards State of Victoria, DHHS November 2015
 and
 Protect – Identifying All Forms of Child Abuse in Victorian Schools 2016