



# Child Safe Policy

## Vision

*To provide inclusive and engaging learning that empowers all students for life.*

## Values

•Respect    •Inclusion    •Knowledge

### **Our commitment to child safety**

Our organisation is committed to child safety.

We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.

We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment 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 worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

Our organisation is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

Our organisation has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.

Our organisation is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

Our organisations is committed to The Koorie Inclusive School Wide Positive Behaviour Support (KI SWPBS). This initiative will enable a truly inclusive school culture to be created, inclusive of all cultures, religion and gender identities and where local history, heritage and the values of the nation's first people can be explored and celebrated.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

**If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.**

## **Our children**

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation. We 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 in our organisation, 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.

## **Our staff and volunteers**

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

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct (located on the server under staff shared\2.1 - School Policies and Operations\Child Safe Standards Policies-Procedures-Child Safety Code of Conduct and the Department of Education website [www.education.vic.gov.au](http://www.education.vic.gov.au)) 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 organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational 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; and 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 to ensure they understand our organisation'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 the Department of Education'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.

## **Recruitment**

We take 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 organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

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. Please see the [Working with Children Check](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website <[www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au)> for further information

We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision making process. If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context. The applicant will be informed of the need for Echuca Twin Rivers Specialist School to investigate and evaluate the risk in regard to our zero tolerance to child abuse stated in our Child Safety Policy. We include questions regarding child safety during interviews, reference checks and induction processes.

## **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 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 children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

## **Privacy**

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. 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

Our organisation 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.<sup>1</sup>

**Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation 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.<sup>2</sup>

Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 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](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/department-of-justice-and-regulation)

<[www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence)>.

<sup>2</sup>Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the

[Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/department-of-justice-and-regulation)

<[www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence)>.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about [how to make a report to child protection](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first) <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first)>.

## 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, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).

## **Allegations, concerns and complaints**

Our organisation takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

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.

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 above).

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<sup>1</sup>

someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it observing suspicious behaviour.

<sup>1</sup> For example behaviour, please see [An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards: www.dhs.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/word\\_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards-overview.doc](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards-overview.doc)

## **Definition of child abuse**

Child abuse is when a person acts in a way which endangers a child or young person's physical or emotional health or development. Child abuse can be a single incident, but usually takes place over time.

In Victoria, under the Children Youth and Families Act 2005 a child or young person is a person under eighteen years of age.

### **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from an injury inflicted by a person/s. The injury may be inflicted intentionally or may be the inadvertent consequence of physical punishment or physically aggressive treatment of a child. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures.

### **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse occurs when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve the child in sexual activity and the child's parent, caregiver or other person/s has not protected the child. Physical force is sometimes involved. Child sexual abuse involves a wide range of sexual activity. It includes

fondling of the child's genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or other object, or exposure of the child to pornography and grooming.

### **Emotional abuse**

Emotional Abuse occurs when a child's parent or caregiver repeatedly rejects the child or uses threats to frighten the child. This may involve name calling, put downs or continual coldness from the parent or caregiver, to the extent that it significantly damages the child's physical, social, intellectual or emotional development.

### **Neglect**

Neglect is the failure to provide the child with the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, medical attention or supervision, to the extent that the child's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed.

### **The role of school staff**

School staff have a duty of care to protect and preserve the safety, health and wellbeing of children and young people in their care and staff must always act in the best interests of those children and young people. If a staff member has any concerns regarding the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person it is important to take immediate action.

**Note: The role of investigating an allegation of child abuse rests solely with Child Protection and/or Victoria Police.**

The roles and responsibilities of staff in supporting children and young people who are involved with Child Protection may include acting as a support person for students, attending Child Protection case plan meetings, observing and monitoring students' behaviour, and liaising with professionals.

### **Regular review**

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. This policy covers camps, excursions, the school setting and all school approved outings. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.