

ALEXANDRA PRIMARY SCHOOL

~ CHILD SAFE POLICY ~

RATIONALE

Alexandra Primary School Child Safety Policy has been developed in line with the Child Safe Standards. In 2013, the Victorian parliament held an enquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse, resulting in the Betrayal of Trust Report. As a result, the Victorian Government has mandated that all organisations who work with children, including schools, meet the Child Safe standards.

All Victorian schools are required to have a child safety policy and statement of commitment to child safety that details:

- the principles that will guide the school in developing policies and procedures to create and
- maintain a child safe school environment; and
- the actions the school proposes to take to:
 - demonstrate its commitment to child safety and monitor the school's adherence to its Child Safe Policy;
 - support, encourage and enable school staff, parents, and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters; and
 - support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.
- ensure that child safety is considered in the recruitment, selection and management of staff (includes contractors and volunteers).

As part of the broader child safety approach, the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Child Safe Schools) Act 2015 requires that all Victorian schools adopt minimum child safe standards to improve the protection of children, and consistent policies for responding to allegations of abuse.

A child safe school takes deliberate steps to protect children from physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and cultural abuse, and neglect. This commitment to protecting children must be embedded in your school's culture and policies. Responsibility for taking action must be understood and accepted by everyone.

Ministerial Order No. 870 states that child abuse includes:

- Any act committed against a child involving:
 - A sexual offence or
 - An offence under section 49 B (2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
- The infliction, on a child, of:
 - Physical violence or

- Serious emotional or psychological harm
- Serious neglect of a child.

Victorian schools that provide services to children will be required under the Child Safety and Wellbeing Act to ensure that they implement compulsory child safe standards to protect children from harm.

The Standards are:

Standard 1: Strategies to embed a culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements.

Standard 2: A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety.

Standard 3: A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.

Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel.

Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.

Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse.

Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

Ministerial Order 870 - Child Safe Standards - Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools provides guidance on how the Standards apply to a school setting. It came into effect on 1 August 2016. To implement the minimum Standards in accordance with the Order school governing authorities must:

- take account of the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable; and
- make reasonable efforts to accommodate such diversity.

A child safe school fosters and demonstrates openness in a variety of ways. This directly and indirectly creates a culture in which everyone – staff, volunteers, parents, carers and children – feel confident, enabled and supported to safely disclose child safety concerns.

Children have the right to be safe and protected, including at school. It is important that parents and guardians feel confident that their child is safe and well whilst in the care of the school.

COMMITMENT

Our school 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 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.

We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers

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

AIMS

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

IMPLEMENTATION

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

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our 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 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; 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 school'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 school'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 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. Please see the Working with Children Check website (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.

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 a school 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 school 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.
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our school 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.
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

Risk management

In Victoria, schools 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 schools on social media).

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Our school 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.

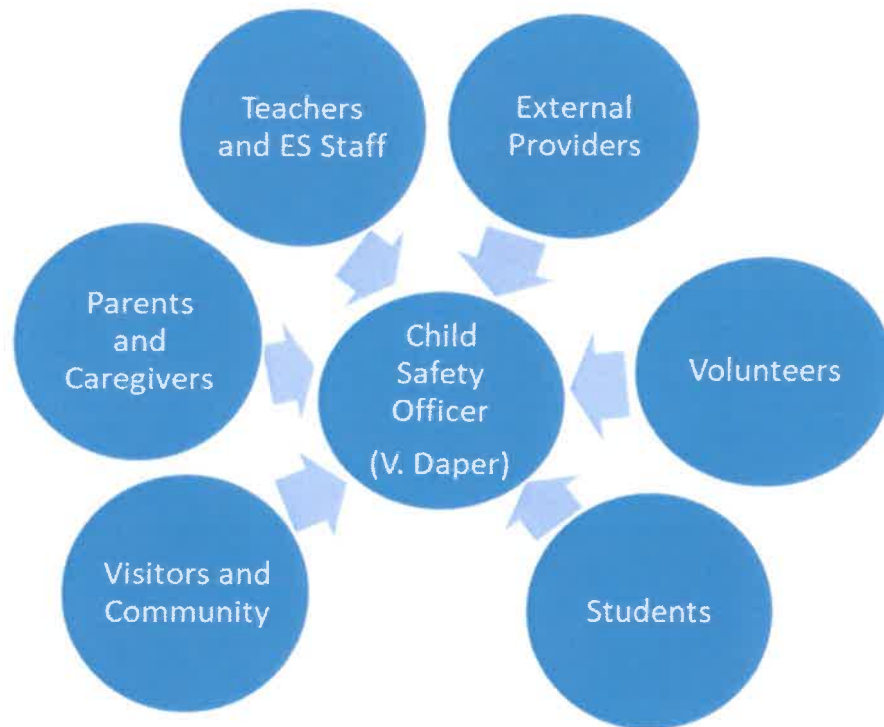
Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

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

Child Safety Officer

Employees and volunteers are supported by our child safety officer with specified 'child-safe' duties in their job description, including being the designated person to hear or be informed about all allegations or concerns, and providing support to other personnel. This will assist in ensuring that child safety is prioritised, and that any allegations of abuse or safety concerns are recorded and responded to consistently and in line with your school's legal requirements and policies and procedures.

Our child safety officer also provides a single contact for children, parents and employees/volunteers to seek advice and support regarding the safety and wellbeing of children associated with your school. Vicky Draper (Principal) is our Child Safety Officer with the specific responsibility for responding to any complaints made by staff, volunteers, parents or children. Our in house complaints processes is outlined Figure 1. In Vicky's absence, her nominated replacement will take on this role/responsibility. In the case of ES staff, it may be appropriate to also inform the teacher concerned that a report has been made. Otherwise all reporting remains confidential and the Child Safe Officer will responded to as per the "Four Critical Actions for School- Responding to incidents, Disclosures and Suspicious Child Abuse" (Attachment 3) using the "Responding to Suspected Student Sexual Offending" pro-form (Attachment 4). Department of Health and Human Services provides a step by step how to make a report to child protection (Attachment 5).



This policy is to be considered in conjunction with the following documents:

- Code of Conduct
- Statement of Commitment
- VIT Register
- Working with Children Register
- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Visitors to the School Policy
- Staff Selection Checklist
- Privacy Policy

EVALUATION:

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

Signed: _____

Principal

Signed: _____
School Council President

Date: 24 / 8 / 18