

Dorset Primary School No.5132

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

PURPOSE

All Victorian schools are required to have a child safety policy or 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;
- To support the inclusion of students with disabilities and additional needs in government schools;
- An inclusive education system enables all students to be welcomed, accepted and engaged so that they can participate, achieve and thrive in school life. Inclusive education:
 - ensures that students with disabilities are not discriminated against and are accommodated to participate in education on the same basis as their peers;
 - acknowledges and responds to the diverse needs, identities and strengths of all students occurs when students with disabilities and additional needs are treated with respect and are involved in making decisions about their education;
 - benefits students of all abilities in the classroom and fosters positive cultural change in attitudes and beliefs about disability, in and beyond the school environment
 - contributes to positive learning, engagement and wellbeing outcomes for students.
- Protect students from all forms of abuse;
- The actions the school proposes to take to:
 - Demonstrate its commitment to child safety and monitor the school's adherence to its child safety 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 with student well-being programs (Real Schools) support staff including psychologists, counsellors and chaplains as well as other medical professionals.
 - Promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally or linguistically different backgrounds and the safety of children who are vulnerable or have a disability.

To promote child safety in the school environment we acknowledge the following:

1. All students have a right to:

- 1.1. Take part in learning programs that meet their individual needs.
- 1.2. Feel secure and to be safe in a caring and supportive environment.
- 1.3. Work and play without interference in an atmosphere of harmony and cooperation.
- 1.4. Receive respect, kindness and courtesy and to be treated with fairness.
- 1.5. Have learning continue without disruption in a supportive environment.
- 1.6. Be valued for their individuality including: race, gender, cultural, physical or intellectual diversity.
- 1.7. Expect the school rules are fair, consistently implemented and respect the rights of all involved.

2. All students have a responsibility to:

- 2.1. Care and value themselves, others, teachers and the school community.
- 2.2. Be safety conscious in relation to themselves and others.
- 2.3. Treat others with respect and good manners.
- 2.4. Keep the guidelines of good behaviour, modelling and supporting school rules.
- 2.5. Develop a sense of accountability for their own actions.
- 2.6. Work to achieve their personal best whilst allowing others to do the same.
- 2.7. Allow for others to learn and to respect the right of others.
- 2.8. Explore their full potential in their learning.
- 2.9. 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.
- 2.10. Make a reasonable effort to accommodate diversity.

1. School staff adheres to the following standards about the ways in which school staff are expected to behave with children:

- 1.1. School staff will embed a culture of child safety.
- 1.2. School staff provide opportunities for all students to learn.
- 1.3. School staff treat their students with courtesy and dignity.
- 1.4. School staff work within the limits of their professional expertise.
- 1.5. School staff maintain objectivity in their relationships with students.
- 1.6. School staff are always in a professional relationship with the students in their school whether at school or not.
- 1.7. School staff will always promote the participation and empowerment of children.
- 1.8. School staff will participate in training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel.
- 1.9. School staff will adhere to processes to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of suspected child abuse

Forming a belief on reasonable grounds

A person may form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection after becoming aware that a child or young person's health, safety or wellbeing is at risk.

Reporting a belief

Mandated staff members (*Teachers and Principals*) must make a report to Child Protection as soon as practicable after forming a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection.

Staff members, **whether or not mandated**, need to report to the principal or assistant principal their belief when the belief is formed in the course of undertaking their professional duties. A report must be made as soon as practicable after forming the belief and on each occasion on which they become aware of any further reasonable grounds for the belief. If one staff member has a different view from another staff member about making a report and the staff member continues to hold the belief that a child is in need of protection, that person is obliged to make a report.

Making a mandatory report

Once a teacher or principal has formed a belief or a disclosure has been made, a report must be made to the Department of Human Services Child Protection as soon as practicable.

A teacher may wish to seek assistance or advice to help form the belief that a report is required and assistance to make the report. This is entirely appropriate and should form part of normal school procedures.

Privacy laws allow school staff to share a child's personal and health information for the primary purpose it was collected. In the school context this purpose includes to:

- support the education of the student;
- plan for individual needs and address any barriers to learning;
- support the social and emotional wellbeing and health of the student;
- fulfil duty of care obligations to the student, other students, staff and visitors;
- make reasonable adjustments if the student has a disability, including a medical condition or mental illness;
- provide a safe, inclusive and secure workplace.

As a school staff member you are permitted to share certain information about a child with other staff members for these purposes without needing to obtain the consent of parents/guardians.

Note: Please refer to *Mandatory Reporting Policy* for more information.

These procedures do not:

- Prohibit or discourage school staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse to a person external to the school;
- State or imply that it is the victim's responsibility to inform the police or other authorities of the allegation;
- Require staff to make a judgment about the truth of the allegation of child abuse; or
- Prohibit staff from making records in relation to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse.

Mandatory reporting is a requirement of all staff. A mandatory reporter who fails to comply with these reporting obligations may be committing a criminal offence. (See: *Mandatory Reporting Policy* for further clarification).

Legislative Responsibilities

Dorset Primary 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 Dorset Primary School commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child 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.

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

- Public availability of the 'Step by Step Guide to Making a Report to Child Protection or Child First' document distributed to school staff (distributed 17/9/2018)
- Refer to Four Critical Actions for Schools (poster) – Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse document distributed to school staff (distributed 17/9/2018)
- Risk management strategies have been developed within the following school policies:
 - *Mandatory Reporting Policy*
 - *Student Engagement Policy*
 - *Duty Of Care Policy*
 - *Custody Policy*

- *Bullying Policy*
 - *Responding To Sexual Assault Policy*
 - *Code Of Conduct Policy*
 - *Working With Children Policy*
 - References: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/dutyofcare.aspx>
- If the school identifies risks of child abuse occurring in one or more school environments the authority must make a record of those risks and specify the action (s) the school will take to reduce or remove the risks (risk controls).
- Explanatory note: Different risk controls may be necessary for particular groups of children depending on the nature of the risk and the diversity characteristics of children affected by the risk.*
- As part of its risk management strategy and practices, the school must monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls.
 - At least annually, the school must ensure that appropriate guidance and training is provided to the individual members of the school staff about:
 - Individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse;
 - Child abuse risks in the school environment; and
 - The school's current child safety standards.

Strategies to promote child empowerment and participation

- The school authority must develop strategies to deliver appropriate education about:
 - Standards of behaviour for students attending the school;
 - Healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality);
 - Resilience; and
 - Child abuse awareness and prevention.
- The school must promote the child safety standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children.

Note: Fulfilling the roles and responsibilities contained in reporting procedures does not displace or discharge other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of abuse.

An induction program will be conducted for all new and existing staff at the beginning of each school year to ensure Child Safe Standards are adhered to. Any new staff that enter the school will be informed of their responsibilities.

To embed an organisational culture of safety, any external agency will need to:

- Present current Working With Children (WWCC) or Victoria Institute of Teaching (VIT) card;
- Sign in to the school as a visitor and display the label;
- Adhere to all Child Safe Policies within the school.