



Macedon Primary School Child Safe Policy

PURPOSE

The child safe policy sets out the school's approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe; and provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

SCOPE AND AUDIENCE

The policy covers all staff, volunteers, contractors (whether they come into contact with children) and applies to all school related activities including those beyond the school environment i.e. camps, excursions, outside hours care.

OUR COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Macedon Primary School is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making. **The school has zero tolerance for child abuse.** The school is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to cultural safety of Aboriginal children, young children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

Every person involved in the school has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role s/he plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

In its planning, decision making and operations Macedon Primary School:

- takes a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
- values and empowers children to participate in decisions which affect their lives; and
- fosters a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children.

This will be supported by all staff understanding their child safety role, being mindful of and building respectful and safe relationships with children and other school staff; respects diversity in cultures and child rearing while keeping child safety paramount;

This policy provides written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children; engages only the most suitable people to work with children and high quality staff and volunteer

supervision and professional development; ensures children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise issues.

Macedon Primary School is structured around learning communities and so all children will be able to forge strong and respectful relationships in their learning spaces with multiple teachers thereby giving them opportunities to seek support from a number of significant others in their immediate day to day learning environment.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Policies and procedures outlining the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards are outlined below. The school's Child Safe Leader may be contacted for more information.

A Child Safe Culture

The school's culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden. Macedon Primary 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 are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, young children and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability. We have policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

If there is a belief that a child is in immediate risk of abuse, phone 000.

Implementation

Our children

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 the safety of particularly young children is considered; and
- 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 school. All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by and sign a copy of our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct. The school's plan for creating a child safe culture can be found on the school's website, along with all of the school's policies.

Personnel understand their roles and responsibilities/Code of Conduct

School leaders and managers ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's Code of Conduct. The Code will be discussed and a shared/collective staff understanding of the Code's content will form part of the first curriculum day of each school year, to tune staff into their child safe responsibilities. New staff will have the Code of Conduct provided to them as part of their induction, so that they too will have the same understanding as all other staff, and in turn, apply it accordingly. The school's Code of Conduct sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and can be found on the school's website alongside the Child Safe Policy.

Human Resources, Practices and Training

The school applies best practice and standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. We will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our

commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. All prospective staff and volunteers are required to undergo National Criminal History Records check and maintain a valid Working With Children Check. 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 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. 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.

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 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. The school's approach to human resources practices that ensure child safety can be found on the school's website along with all other school policies.

Allegations, Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

The school has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. Immediate action should include reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection or another appropriate agency and notifying the principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns. The school will take action to respond to a complaint. 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 including investigation updates. All records are securely stored. The school's policy and procedures for reporting a child safety concern or complaint can be found on the school's website along with all other school policies. Our school takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and promptly. 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. 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; or
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it observing suspicious behaviour.

Legislative responsibilities

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 Reduction and Management

Our school takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

All Victorian Teachers have a legal responsibility to report incidents where children's safety is at risk.

Victorian Government School employees are expected to follow the DET Mandatory Reporting policy which can be found at:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/childprotection.aspx>

The school believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures. In Victoria, schools are required to protect children when a risk is identified. 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). The school's approach to Child Safety risk reduction and management can be found on the school's website along with all other school policies.

Listening to Children

The school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/carers. We encourage child and parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parent/carers to understand their rights and responsibilities. When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct with, or abuse of, a child the school will listen to the complainant's account of things and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (or their parents/carers) informed about progress.

Confidentiality and Privacy

The school collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws. 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. Child Safe Policy 2018

Policy Evaluation and Review

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed in context of school self – evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework. The review will include input from the students, parents/carers and the school community. This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s three-year review cycle and following significant incidents if they occur.

Review Date: 2021

Definitions

A full list of definitions for Ministerial Order No. 870 is available at www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes.

References and Resources

Victorian Government, Education & Reform Act 2006, Gazette No. S2, January 2016, Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools, Ministerial Order No. 870.

Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority (2016) Information Sheet. CHILD SAFETY STANDARD 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety.

Commission for Children and Young People (2015) A Guide For Creating A Child Safe Organisation, Version 2.0.

Evaluation:

To be reviewed as part of the school’s three year review process.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in: November 0218

Last review: 20 November 2018

Date of next review: 20 November 2020