



Child Safe Environments Policy and Procedures

Date approved by School Council	<i>6th December 2016</i>
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Purpose

The child safe standards are part of the Victorian Government's response to the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations. The Betrayal of Trust Report found that while the majority of children are safe in organisations and in the community, more work could be done to strengthen existing approaches to child safety.

The Victorian Parliament passed the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015 to introduce child safe standards into law. The standards will commence from 1 January 2016 for most organisations working with children, with the aim of promoting cultural change in the way organisations manage the risk of child abuse and neglect. The child safe standards aim to drive cultural change in organisations that provide services for children so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in everyday thinking and practice.

The child safe environments 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.

Rationale

Seaford Park Primary School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making. The school community takes a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety.

Seaford Park Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse and is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

We ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues. We foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children. We engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development.

Every person involved in Seaford Park Primary School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she 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, Seaford Park Primary School will

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety
2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount
5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development
7. Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities



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9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

Scope

All staff, volunteers, contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people. This policy will apply across a range of school forums (e.g. camps, online) and outside of school hours.

Aims

To create and maintain a child safe organisation, an entity to which the standards apply must have:

Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements (See Appendix 1)

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 (See Appendix 3)

Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel (See Working with Children Check Policy)

Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse (See Seaford Park Primary School Mandatory Reporting Policy)

Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse (See Appendix 4)

Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children (See Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy)

Implementation

Seaford Park Primary School will demonstrate its commitment to *child safety* and monitor the school's adherence to its *Child Safety Policy* on an annual basis through sharing the policy with staff, casual relief teachers, volunteers, school council, and the school community. In order to:

- 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*.

Monitoring the child safe policy will be managed by:

- embedding of child safety strategies into daily school procedures
- a commitment to child safety
- a code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
- screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
- providing a clear processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
- implementing strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
- developing strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children

Supervision

- Supervision of employees and volunteers should be managed in a way that protects children from abuse and improves accountability and performance, without being onerous or heavy-handed. For instance, where practical, two staff members should be present during activities with children. In particular, children with a disability may require additional supervision.



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- As a matter of good practice, new employees and volunteers should be supervised regularly to ensure they understand their role and learn skills, as well as to check that their behaviour towards children is appropriate. Any warning signs should be reported through appropriate channels, including your organisation's internal reporting procedures (such as your child safety officer and leadership), the Department of Health and Human Services (child protection), or police if a child is believed to be at imminent risk.

Performance and development review

- A proactive performance development strategy will be used to improve employees and volunteers skills and knowledge on child safety. This is also an opportunity to improve knowledge and skills in working with children, as well as recognising and responding to suspected abuse. Training may be through professional discussions of the Child Safety standards and or online training in Mandatory Reporting.

Code of conduct and mandatory reporting

- Seaford Park PS will provide all staff with a code of conduct which outlines expected standards of appropriate behaviour with and in the company of children. Annually the policy and code will be reviewed and each staff member will sign the code and it will be filed on the personnel file.
- Disciplinary procedures should be used if an allegation of child abuse is not made or a breach of the code of conduct is known or suspected.
- Employees and volunteers must be aware of reporting procedures and how to communicate concerns regarding the improper behaviour of any person within the organisation. Members of the school must be aware of their duty to raise concerns about the behaviour of any person who may present a risk of child abuse, without fear of repercussions. A Mandatory Reporting policy is attached.
- Children and their families should be encouraged to raise any concerns about the behaviour of any person, and can expect to be listened to and supported.

Policy and procedures

Policies and procedures outlining Seaford Park Primary School's approach to the Child Safe Standards are outlined below. For further information, please contact the school's Principal or Assistant Principal.

A child-safe culture

Seaford Park Primary School's culture encourages staff and community raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

Personnel understand their roles and responsibilities/Code of Conduct

School leaders and managers will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and the behaviour expected in order to protect children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's Professional Code of Conduct. The school's Professional Code of Conduct sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Refer to the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Victorian Teachers' Professional Codes of Conduct and Ethics. Volunteers in the school will also sign a Code of Conduct that clearly sets out the behaviours expected of adults working within the school environment.

<u>Human resources practices and training</u>	The school applies best practice 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 them. 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.
<u>Reporting a child safety concern or complaint</u>	The school has clear expectations for staff, volunteers and members of the community in regards to making a report when a child is in potential danger. Immediate action should include reporting their concerns to the Principal or Assistant Principal. A report will then be made to DHHS Child Protection or another appropriate agency.
<u>Risk reduction and management</u>	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.
<u>Listening to children</u>	The school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves communicating with children, young people and their parents/care givers. We encourage child and parent/care giver involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/care givers to understand their rights and their responsibilities.
<u>Confidentiality and Privacy</u>	Considerable importance is placed on safeguarding the confidentiality and privacy of information about particular children and their families. The collection, use and storage of information is included in school policies.
<u>Breaches</u>	Breaches of Duty of Care and Mandatory Reporting Obligations are identified in the specific policies.
<u>Policy evaluation and review</u>	To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework.
<u>Definitions</u>	<p>A full list of definitions for Ministerial Order No. 870 is available at www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes</p> <p><i>Child abuse</i> includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any act committed against a child involving – a sexual offence or an offence under section 49B(2) of the <i>Crimes Act 1958</i> (grooming)• The infliction, on a child, of- Physical violence or

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Serious emotional or psychological harm

- Serious neglect of a child

Child safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events)

School staff means:

In a government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:

- employed under Part 2.4 of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (ETR Act)* in the government teaching service or
- employed under a contract of service by the council of the school under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act or
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)

Related policies and Documents

School Policy Advisory Guide – Duty of Care
School Policy Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations
DET Child Wellbeing and Safety Framework

Appendix - The Child Safety Standards and School Responsibilities:

Standard 1

For schools: Ministerial Order No. 870 requirements

Minimum child safety standard: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety in accordance with clause 7.

Clause 7

1. The *school council* will:
 - a. develop strategies to embed a culture of *child safety* at the school;
 - b. allocate roles and responsibilities for achieving the strategies;
 - c. inform the school community about the strategies, and allocated roles and responsibilities;
 - d. put the strategies into practice, and inform the school community about these practices; and
 - e. periodically review the effectiveness of the strategies put into practice and, if considered appropriate, revise those strategies.



Standard 2

For schools: Ministerial Order No. 870 requirements Minimum child safety standard: A child safety policy or a statement of commitment to child safety in accordance with clause 8.

Clause 8

1. The school council will ensure that the school has a *child safety* policy or statement of commitment to *child safety* that details:
 - a. the values and principles that will guide the school in developing policies and procedures to create and maintain a child safe *school environment* ; and
 - b. the actions the school proposes to take to:
 - i. demonstrate its commitment to *child safety* and monitor the school's adherence to its *child safety* policy or statement of commitment;
 - ii. support, encourage and enable *school staff*, parents, and children to understand, identify, discuss and report *child safety* matters; and.
 - iii. support or assist children who disclose *child abuse*, or are otherwise linked to suspected *child abuse* .
2. The *school council* must inform the school community about the policy or statement, and make the policy or statement publicly available.

Standard 3

For schools: Ministerial Order No. 870 requirements

Minimum child safety standard: A child safety code of conduct in accordance with clause 9.

Clause 9

1. The *school council* will develop, endorse, and make publicly available a code of conduct that:
 - a. has the objective of promoting *child safety* in the school environment;
 - b. sets standards about the ways in which *school staff* are expected to behave with children;
 - c. takes into account the interests of *school staff* (including other professional or occupational codes of conduct that regulate particular *school staff*), and the needs of all children; and
 - d. is consistent with the school's *child safety* strategies, policies and procedures as revised from time to time.

Standard 4

For schools: Ministerial Order No. 870 requirements

Minimum child safety standard: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse in accordance with clause 10.

Clause 10

1. Subject to the requirements of the *ETR Act*, the *school council* must ensure that the school implements practices for a child-safe environment in accordance with this clause.



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2. Each job or category of jobs for *school staff* that involves *child connected work* must have a clear statement that sets out:
 - a. the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding *child safety* ; and
 - b. the job occupant's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to *child safety* .
3. All applicants for jobs that involve *child connected work* for the school must be informed about the school's *child safety* practices (including the code of conduct).
4. In accordance with any applicable legal requirement or school policy, the school must make reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about a person whom it proposes to engage to perform *child connected work* :
 - a. Working with Children Check status, or similar check;
 - b. proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications;
 - c. the person's history of work involving children; and
 - d. references that address the person's suitability for the job and working with children.
5. (5) The school need not comply with the requirements in clause (4), above if it has already made reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the information set out in clauses (4)(a) to (4)(d), above about a particular individual within the previous 12 months.
6. The school must ensure that appropriate supervision or support arrangements are in place in relation to:
 - a. the induction of new *school staff* into the school's policies, codes, practices, and procedures governing *child safety* and *child connected work* ; and
 - b. monitoring and assessing a job occupant's continuing suitability for *child connected work* .
7. The school must implement practices that enable the school council to be satisfied that people engaged in child-connected work perform appropriately in relation to *child safety*.

NB: The school council needs to be satisfied about the appropriateness of the school's arrangements that would regulate or guide other people who make such decisions for or on behalf of the school about child safety matters and child-connected work.

Standard 5

For schools: Ministerial Order No. 870 requirements

Minimum child safety standard: Procedures for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse in accordance with clause 11.

Clause 11

1. The *school council* must have a clear procedure or set of procedures for responding to allegations of suspected *child abuse* in accordance with this requirement and other legal obligations.
2. The *school council* must ensure that the procedure is:
 - a. sensitive to the diversity characteristics of the school community;
 - b. made publicly available; and
 - c. accessible to children, *school staff* , and the wider community.
3. The procedure must:
 - a. cover all forms of '*child abuse* ' as defined in the *ETR Act* ;
 - b. apply to allegations or disclosures of *child abuse* made by or in relation to a child, *school staff* , visitors, or other persons while connected to a *school environment* ;
 - c. identify the positions of the person or people who are responsible for:



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- promptly managing the school's response to an allegation or disclosure of **child abuse**, and ensuring that the allegation or disclosure is taken seriously;
 - responding appropriately to a child who makes or is affected by an allegation of **child abuse** ;
 - monitoring overall school compliance with this procedure; and
 - managing an alternative procedure for responding to an allegation or disclosure if the person allocated responsibility under clause (3)(c)(i), above cannot perform his or her role;
- d. include a statement that fulfilling the roles and responsibilities contained in the procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse;
- e. clearly describe the actions the school will take to respond to an allegation of **child abuse**, including actions to:
- inform appropriate authorities about the allegation (including but not limited to mandatory reporting);
 - protect any child connected to the alleged **child abuse** until the allegation is resolved; and
 - make, secure, and retain records of the allegation of **child abuse** and the school's response to it.
4. The procedure must not:
- a. prohibit or discourage school staff from reporting an allegation of **child abuse** to a person external to the school;
 - b. state or imply that it is the victim's responsibility to inform the police or other authorities of the allegation;
 - c. require staff to make a judgment about the truth of the allegation of **child abuse** ; or
 - d. prohibit staff from making records in relation to an allegation or disclosure of **child abuse** .

Standard 6

For schools: Ministerial Order No. 870 requirements

Minimum child safety standard: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse in accordance with clause 12.

Clause 12

1. **The school council will develop and implement risk management strategies regarding child safety in school environments .**
2. The school's risk management strategies regarding **child safety** must identify and mitigate the risk(s) of **child abuse in school environments** by taking into account the nature of each **school environment**, the activities expected to be conducted in that environment (including the provision of services by contractors or outside organisations), and the characteristics and needs of all children expected to be present in that environment.
3. If the **school council will** identify 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.



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4. As part of its risk management strategy and practices, the school council must monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls.
5. At least annually, the *school council* must ensure that appropriate guidance and training is provided to the individual members of the *school council* and *school staff* about:
 - a. individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of *child abuse*;
 - b. *child abuse* risks in the school environment; and
 - c. the school's current *child safety* standards

Standard 7

For schools: Ministerial Order No. 870 requirements.

Minimum child safety standard: Strategies to promote child participation and empowerment in accordance with clause 13.

Clause 13

1. The *school council will* develop strategies to deliver appropriate education about:
 - a. standards of behaviour for students attending the school;
 - b. healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality);
 - c. resilience; and
 - d. *child abuse* awareness and prevention.
2. The *school council* must promote the *child safety* standards required by the Order in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children.

Inclusion Principles

In complying with the child safe standards, schools need to be mindful of the diversity of students and school communities and include the following principles as part of each standard:

- promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children
- promoting the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promoting the safety of children with a disability.

References:

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three year review cycle or earlier if circumstances deem it necessary.