

Child Safety Policy

Ratified by School Council: 2016

Review date: 2018

PROTECT



Rationale

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

- 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:
 - i. demonstrate its commitment to child safety and monitor the school's adherence to its child safety policy;
 - 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.

Commitment to Child Safety

Pascoe Vale South Primary School (PVSPS) 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.

PVSPS has zero tolerance for child abuse and all allegations will be treated seriously and consistently within the legal, moral and human rights frameworks, implementing the required guidelines, processes and protocols.

We are 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 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.

PVSPS is committed to preventing child abuse. We have robust human resource and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers, training that educate staff and volunteers on child abuse risks and procedures in place that support the leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve this commitment.

Every person involved in PVSPS has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play 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.

Principles

In its planning, decision-making and operations PVSPS 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;



9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.¹

In the school environment we acknowledge the following

All students have a right to:

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

All students have a responsibility to:

- Care and value themselves, others, teachers and the school community.
- Be safety conscious in relation to themselves and others.
- Treat others with respect and good manners.
- Keep the guidelines of good behaviour, modelling and supporting school rules.
- Develop a sense of accountability for their own actions.
- Work to achieve their personal best whilst allowing others to do the same.
- Allow for others to learn and to respect the rights of others.
- Explore their full potential in their learning.

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

- School staff provide opportunities for all students to learn.
- School staff treat their students with courtesy and dignity.
- School staff work within the limits of their professional expertise.
- School staff maintain objectivity in their relationships with students.
- School staff are always in a professional relationship with the students in their school whether at school or not.

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.

Please refer to the Student Welfare - Mandatory Reporting Policy for procedures in response to allegations of child abuse.

¹ Adapted from Our Community (2016) *Child Protection Toolkit: What every not-for-profit organisation must do now.*



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.

Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

- Risk management strategies have been developed within the following school policies:
 - Mandatory Reporting Policy
 - Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy
 - Supervision and Duty of Care Policy
- 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 will 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 will promote the child safety standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children.

Links

- DET The Child Safe Standards - <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/health/Pages/childsafes.aspx>

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school policy review cycle or if required due to circumstances such as changes in DET policies or legislation.