

# CHILD SAFETY POLICY

## Rationale

Malvern Central School (**the School**) is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children. This policy approach reflects the Victorian Government's child safe standards which are the compulsory minimum standards for all Victorian schools, to ensure that they are well prepared to protect children from abuse and neglect.

## Statement of commitment to child safety

Our School:

- is committed to child safety;
- wants children to be safe, happy and empowered and supports and respects all children, as well as its staff and volunteers;
- is committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children;
- has zero tolerance of child abuse, and it will treat all allegations and child safety concerns very seriously and consistently with our policies and procedures;
- has legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when its staff and volunteers report child safety concerns;
- is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and mitigating these risks;
- has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and contractors,
- is committed to regular guidance and training our staff and school council members on child abuse risks and child safety standards;
- has specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to uphold our commitment to child safety;
- supports and respects all children, as well as its staff and volunteers and is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

## Aims

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our School. The School involves them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. The School listens to their views and respects what they have to say.

The School promotes diversity and tolerance and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular our School:

- promotes the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children;
- promotes the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- ensures that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

This policy together with the Code of Conduct guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our School.

## Implementation

### Unacceptable behaviours

All staff and volunteers must agree to abide by the Child safe code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

### Reporting of Child Safety concerns

It is important to the School that members of the school community (children, parents, teachers) feel empowered to discuss child safety and raise any concerns about child abuse.

The child safe standards require organisations that provide services for children to have processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse. The School will report any inappropriate behaviour through required channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

The School records all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using its MCS Child Safe incident report form. All records are securely stored.

### How to report incidents or concerns about child safety or child abuse

#### 1. Child's concerns

If a child has a concern about their own safety or the safety of another child, they should tell a trusted adult, which may be a parent, teacher or the principal. If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred, then they must report the incident.

#### 2. Parent, volunteer non-teaching staff concerns

All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have a legal obligation to report that information to the police. Call 000.

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred (other than a sexual offence), then they must report the incident to the Principal or Assistant Principal. 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.

#### 3. Teaching staff concerns

Victorian teachers are subject to mandatory reporting requirements, about which they receive regular training.

#### 4. School leadership

In addition to mandatory reporting requirements, the Principal and Assistant Principal must follow the Department of Education and Training requirements set out as "Four Critical Actions for Schools-responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse".

[http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions\\_ChildAbuse.pdf](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf)

### Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our School understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

The School's organisational 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. The School trains its staff to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

The School also supports its staff through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and to 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 will be trained to ensure they understand the 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.

Training is provided to volunteers reflecting the nature of volunteer activity and the extent of engagement with children.

### **Recruitment of Staff**

The School takes all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. The School develops selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate its commitment to child safety and an awareness of its social and legislative responsibilities. The School understands that when recruiting staff it has ethical as well as legislative obligations. The School carries out reference checks and verifies VIT registration (which includes police record checks).

The School actively encourages applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

### **Fair procedures for staff**

The safety and wellbeing of children is the School's primary concern. The School is also fair and just to staff. The decisions the School makes when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

### **Volunteers**

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 Policy and the [Working with Children Check](#) website for further information.

### **Risk management strategies**

The School has risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to mitigate child abuse risks. The risk management strategy identifies and manages the risk of child abuse. This strategy takes into account the school environment, the activities conducted and the children present.

### **Resources:**

- MCS Child Safe incident report form
- [An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards](#)
- [Ministerial Order No. 870](#)

### **Evaluation:**

- This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents should one occur.
- Next review date: 2018

This policy was last ratified by School Council in: ***December 2016***