

CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Child Safe Standard 4

PURPOSE

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.

This policy has been developed in recognition of Malvern Central School's commitment to fully comply with Ministerial Order 870: Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools.

A key response by the Victorian Government to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations was the release of the Ministerial Order effective of August 1st, 2016.

AIMS

To ensure appropriate arrangements are in place to regulate the conduct and decisions of school staff in eliminating the possibility of child abuse

To provide parameters for all child connected work (school authorised and within the school environment)

To provide confidence with the school community that all children involved in authorised child connected work in the school environment are safe from abuse

To ensure that the school has strategies that embed a culture of child safety

To ensure the school has procedures for responding and reporting allegations of suspected child abuse.

DEFINITIONS

ETR Act means the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* as amended from time to time.

Child means a child enrolled as a student at the school.

Child-connected work means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child abuse includes—

- a) any act committed against a child involving—
 - (i) a sexual offence; or
 - (ii) an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming); and
- b) the infliction, on a child, of—
 - (i) physical violence; or
 - (ii) serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- c) 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) a campus of the school;
- b) online school environments (including email and intranet systems); and
- c) 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 governing authority means:

- a) the proprietor of a school, including a person authorised to act for or on behalf of the proprietor; or
- b) the governing body for a school (however described), as authorised by the proprietor of a school or the ETR Act; or
- c) the principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school, the school governing body, or the ETR Act.

School staff means:

- a) in a Government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:
 - (i) employed under Part 2.4 of the ETR Act in the government teaching service; or
 - (ii) employed under a contract of service by the council of the school under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act; or
 - (iii) a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary).

Implementation

Embedding an Organisational Culture of Child Safety (Standards 1 & 2)

- Malvern Central School is committed to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse (child safety) and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse in all physical and virtual places made accessible to children through available or authorised use during or outside of school hours (school environments).
- The responsibility of leading the culture of child safety at Malvern Central School lies with the Principal who will be supported by the Assistant Principal, the School Wellbeing Co-ordinator, the School Council and the entire school staff.
- The school's culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden
- Malvern Central School will have number of policies and documents that contribute to the development of a culture of child safety including:
 - MCS Statement of values and School Philosophy
 - MCS Volunteers Policy
 - MCS Yard Duty and Supervision Policy
 - MCS Mandatory Reporting Policy
 - MCS Excursions and Camps Policy
 - MCS External Providers Policy
 - MCS Student Engagement & Wellbeing Policy
 - Equal Opportunity Policy – DET, applies to all government schools until the DET Policy Template for schools is completed.

- Privacy Policy – DET
- **Malvern Central School’s approach to Child Safety risk reduction and management can be found in:**
 - Staff Code of Conduct (in relation to expectations of behaviour with children)
 - Working With Children Checks
 - Staff Induction and professional learning
 - Camp Planning Documentation
 - Excursion, Incursion & Events Planning Documentation including Risk Assessments.
- Malvern Central School’s child safety strategies, procedures and practices will be inclusive of the needs of all children in accordance to the school’s Equal Opportunity Policy, and in particular students who are vulnerable to abuse due to age, family circumstances, disabilities and Indigenous, cultural or linguistic background. The school’s Code of Conduct sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Child Safety Code of Conduct (Standard 3)

- The school will have a code of conduct for all teaching, non-teaching, contracted adults (employed or engaged), volunteers and external program providers involved in child-connected work in all school environments.
- This code of conduct will set the standards about the circumstances and ways people in the above roles are expected to behave and interact with children.

School Staff Selection, Supervision and Management Practices for a Child-Safe Environment (Standard 4)

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 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.

Malvern Central School will ensure that staff:

- Will have a form of proof of identity and qualifications recorded with the school
- Will have their suitability for child connected work assessed and referenced as part of the recruitment process. This assessment will be through facilities such as the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Working with Children Checks or any other appropriate facility
- Will have their history of work involving children recorded with the school
- Will have a reference statement to the staff code of conduct in relation to child safety in their job description
- Will have a child safety in relation to child abuse component to their initial and annual induction sessions
- Will have annual professional learning in child safety in relation to child abuse including mandatory reporting
- New staff will be provided with supervision or support arrangements in relation to assessing their suitability for child connected work.

Procedures for Responding To and Reporting Allegations of Suspected Child Abuse (Standard 5)

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.

- Malvern Central School recognises that all allegations of actual or suspected child abuse in any form must be mandatory reported.
- Malvern Central School's commitment to mandatory reporting will be outlined in the school's Mandatory Reporting Policy and the school's procedures to reporting and responding to all allegations of actual or suspected child abuse.

Identifying and Reducing/Removing Risks of Child Abuse (Standard 6)

- Malvern Central School will have a procedure for all child connected work in all environments that evaluates risks in relation to child safety. The procedure will cover the work of:
 - Teaching staff
 - Education Support Staff
 - Volunteers
 - Visitors Including Contractors
 - External Program Provider Staff
 - Other personnel the school deems appropriate.
- Malvern Central School will immediately implement management strategies for any recognised risk of child safety in relation to child abuse that will mitigate that risk.

Promotion of Child Empowerment and Participation (Standard 7)

- Malvern Central School will provide strategies to promote child empowerment through student programs and parent education programs that:
 - Promote students' awareness of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relation to child safety practices
 - Develop understanding of the processes students have in raising child safety in relation to child abuse issues in all school environments and outside school hours
 - Cover educational strategies for resilience and healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality)
 - Operate in accordance to the school's Equal Opportunity Policy to ensure inclusion of students who are vulnerable

Risk reduction and management

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

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 parents/carers to understand their rights and their 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.

REFERENCES

DET Child Protection and Child Safe Standards (PROTECT)

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/default.aspx>

EVALUATION

This policy was last updated on 16th July, 2019 and is scheduled for review on 16th July, 2021

This policy was endorsed by School Council on August 21st, 2019