



Child Safe Policy 2016

Our Child Safe Policy is publicly available to help raise awareness about the importance of child safety in our school. It demonstrates our commitment to protecting children from abuse. Child Safety Standard One has five specific requirements:

Our school 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;
- e. periodically review the effectiveness of the strategies put into practice and, if considered appropriate, revise those strategies.

Our school will use the following child safety strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety.

Our school organisation and staff will:

- Communicate that we have **zero tolerance of child abuse** (in any form).
- Include child safety as a standing item for discussion at appropriate meetings.
- Develop and enhance child safety strategies through ongoing review of the effectiveness of practice.
- Conduct an appropriate reporting process for child abuse that includes overseeing outcomes.
- Oversee the implementation and improvement of child safety strategies.
- Communicate with the school community about the school's child safety strategies and their implementation.
- Report on child safety in its annual report.
- Ensure awareness of the child safety strategies and allocate roles and responsibilities.
- Ensure pre-employment reference checks that include checking for child safety.
- Check identification for staff as part of recruitment.
- Confirm currency of Working with Children Check/Victorian Institute of Teaching registration.
- Obtain verified academic transcripts for staff as part of recruitment.
- Query gaps in employment history.
- Conduct induction in child safety for all staff, volunteers and contractors.
- Child safety is a standing item for discussion at staff and manager meetings.
- Ensure staff members are trained to detect inappropriate behaviour.
- Encourage staff to report inappropriate behaviour.
- Review the suitability of existing staff through performance appraisal procedures.
- Recognise and encourage positive behaviours.
- Foster a culture of openness.

Children

- Children are made aware of how to detect and report inappropriate behaviour.
- Children are encouraged to report inappropriate behaviour.
- Children can approach any staff member in relation to their safety.
- Our school has child safety reporting procedures.
- Our school provides counselling and other resources to support children.

Environment

The school has child safety strategies in place for all physical school environments, including:

- Regularly reviewing the physical environment to ensure all risks are identified and managed.
- Assessing new or changed physical environments for child safety risks.
- Supervising or monitoring activities.

- Online environments (eg intranets, online learning systems, social media) including clear boundaries of roles between staff and children and proactive strategies to detect inappropriate behaviour such as online searches (Google, Facebook etc).
- Ensuring visitors are appropriately screened, supervised and made aware of the school's child safety strategies.

Our statement of commitment to child safety

Skye 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, and 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 rigorously adhere to our legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are concerned about a child's safety.

Our organisation is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks. It has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers. Our organisation 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, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Our children

This policy is intended to empower children to be 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. People from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome at Skye Primary School.

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 children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

(Please see Tip Sheets following this policy for further information)

Our staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by 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.

Training and supervision

Training and supervision are important to ensure that everyone in our school understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our 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. 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;
- 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 organisation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse. Checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate is important in administering this policy. (Please refer to Skye Primary 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.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements that 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 actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

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](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> for further information. Our school maintains a Working with Children Check register.

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 and form part of the procedures leading to the registration of teachers through the VIT. We will retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision making process.

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.

Fair procedures for personnel

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 will record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form¹, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

Privacy

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.

Legislative responsibilities

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **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.²
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of any risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.³
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.⁴

Risk management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). 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 of Skye Primary School on social media).

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Our organisation takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. 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 (see information about failure to disclose above).

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 observed⁵
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing behaviour that arouses suspicion.

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

APPENDICES:

1. The Child Safe Standards
2. Cultural Safety for Aboriginal Children
3. Safety of Children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds
4. Empowerment and Participation of Children
5. Safety of Children with a Disability

Appendix: The Standards

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 governing authority** must:
 - 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 governing authority must 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 governing authority** 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 governing authority** must 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 governing authority** must ensure that the school implements practices for a child-safe environment in accordance with this clause.
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 governing authority to be satisfied that people engaged in child-connected work perform appropriately in relation to **child safety**.

NB: The school governing authority 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 governing authority** 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 governing authority** 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:
 - i. promptly managing the school's response to an allegation or disclosure of **child abuse**, and ensuring that the allegation or disclosure is taken seriously;
 - ii. responding appropriately to a child who makes or is affected by an allegation of **child abuse** ;
 - iii. monitoring overall school compliance with this procedure; and
 - iv. 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:
 - i. inform appropriate authorities about the allegation (including but not limited to mandatory reporting);
 - ii. protect any child connected to the alleged **child abuse** until the allegation is resolved; and
 - iii. 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 governing authority** must 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 governing authority** 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.

4. As part of its risk management strategy and practices, the school governing authority must monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls.
5. At least annually, the **school governing authority** must ensure that appropriate guidance and training is provided to the individual members of the **school governing authority** 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 governing authority** must 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 governing authority** 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.

Safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Victoria is a culturally diverse community made up of many different nationalities, cultural backgrounds, language and religious groups.

In Victoria, mandatory child safe standards have been introduced to help protect children from abuse in organisations. In complying with the standards, organisations must promote the cultural safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Like other aspects of child safety, creating and maintaining an organisation in which the cultural safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds is kept safe requires effort.

Steps to ensure cultural safety include sharing knowledge, raising awareness, developing understanding that leads to cultural sensitivity and finally, cultural competence. This ongoing and dynamic process leads to sustainable philosophies and values within an organisation that promotes cultural safety for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and benefits all children, families, staff and managers.

Cultural competency is characterised by a set of behaviours, attitudes and skills, policies and procedures that help staff to work effectively and efficiently in a cross-cultural context at all levels within the organisation.

Multicultural Mental Health Australia

Organisations can demonstrate that they value diversity by accepting and welcoming the differences between and within cultures. Such an inclusive environment acknowledges differences between cultures, but does not value one over another.



Cultural safety for Aboriginal children

“Keeping our children and youth connected to their communities and strong in their identity and culture is essential to their wellbeing and the cornerstone of resilience.”¹

Andrew Jackomos, Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People

It is the right of every Aboriginal child to be immersed in their culture. The right to culture which includes the inherent right to kin, community, cultural practices and identity relates to and impacts upon the enjoyment of every other human right. It is about connections, relationships and experiences and it is the greatest source of resilience for Aboriginal children. Section 19 of the Charter of Human Rights states that Aboriginal people hold distinct rights and must not be denied the right to enjoy their identity and culture, to maintain their kinship ties and to maintain their distinctive spiritual, material and economic relationship with the land and waters with which they have connection under traditional laws and customs.²

For Aboriginal people “culture is about family networks, Elders and ancestors. It’s about relationships, languages, dance, ceremony and heritage. Culture is about spiritual connection to our lands and waters. It is the way we pass on stories and knowledge to our babies and children; it is how we greet each other and look for connection. It is about all the parts that bind us together.”³ (Jackomos 2015)

What is cultural safety?

Cultural safety is “an environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening.”⁴ (Williams, R. 2008)

For Aboriginal people “cultural safety and security requires the creation of:

- Environments of cultural resilience within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Cultural competency by those who engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.⁵ (AHRC Social Justice Report 2011)

Every Aboriginal person, every Aboriginal child needs to feel that their sense of self and their identity is “valued in some way by the people and environments that surround them.”⁶ (VACCA 2010)



1 Commission for Children and Young People, Annual Report 2013-14, September 2014.

2 Section 19, Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (Vic) 2006

3 Commission for Children and Young People Annual Report 2014-15, October 2015

4 Williams, R. (2008), Cultural safety: what does it mean for our work practice? Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 23(2):213-214.

5 The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Social Justice Report 2011

6 Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), (2010). This is Forever Business – a framework for maintaining and restoring cultural safety in Aboriginal Victoria



Safety of children with a disability

Tip Sheet: Child Safe Organisations

All children are vulnerable but some children need special care and protection to ensure they are safe – children with a disability have an increased risk of being abused.

It is unlawful to discriminate against children with a disability and like all children, children with a disability have the right to participate in decision-making that affects them.

In Victoria, mandatory child safe standards have been introduced to help protect children from abuse in organisations. In complying with the standards, organisations must promote the safety of children with a disability. It is your responsibility to uphold the legal and human rights of children with a disability to ensure they are safe when in your care.

Children with a disability are more vulnerable to harm and abuse such as harassment, bullying, humiliation, physical and sexual abuse. This can be due to:

- social isolation
- limited provision of developmentally appropriate sexual and relationship information
- low levels of expectation held about their capacity to identify and report concerns
- inaccessible pathway to raise issues, concerns and complaints
- communication difficulties
- personal care needs requiring the involvement of different people and various levels of supervision
- signs of abuse being viewed as being related to the child's disability.

Each child is different and will experience their disability and the world differently – it is important not to stereotype or make assumptions. It can be hard for a child with a disability to make themselves heard or understood.

What you can do to help keep children with a disability safe in your organisation:

- Ensure your organisation has a child safe culture in which abuse and harm is not tolerated and diversity is welcomed.
- Pre-empt unsafe situations via your risk assessment processes.
- Ensure you have sound recruitment and screening processes in place for staff and volunteers.
- Ensure your code of conduct, for staff and volunteers clearly outlines boundaries about staff and volunteer interaction with children with a disability, including personal care assistance.
- Have a robust complaint process, encourage feedback and be responsive if problems arise.
- Empower children with a disability by assisting them to build their self-esteem and confidence.

A child's disability does not reduce their need for cultural respect and competency.



Empowerment and participation of children

Tip Sheet: Child Safe Organisations

Children have the right to give their views and opinions about decisions that affect them and to be listened to.

Empowerment is about helping children to have their say. Acting to empower children should always guide the work of your organisation.

Participation is important for children because it gives them an opportunity to have a say about issues and decisions that affect them. Children are more likely to speak up about their concerns about feeling unsafe, or make a complaint, if they feel their views are valued and welcomed.



Empowerment and participation is not a one off event – it is an approach that needs to be a part of your organisational culture.

Empowering children and facilitating their participation enhances their safety. In Victoria, mandatory child safe standards have been introduced to help protect children from abuse in organisations. Standard seven requires organisations to take steps to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

Benefits of empowering and supporting the participation of children

Participation and empowerment are vital components of a child safe organisation that benefits children, families, organisations and staff.

- Involving and consulting with children enables your organisation to improve its policies, practices and services as children provide a unique voice regarding what makes them feel safe and unsafe.
- Facilitating the empowerment and participation of children enhances a culture of child safety and listening to children within your organisation.
- Children and young people learn new skills, build self-esteem and develop an understanding of collaboration and rights.
- Children are more likely to report abuse or concerns if they feel safe and empowered in the organisation.
- Children feel their views are valued and listened to. Children are more likely to support the outcome if they have been involved.

It is critical that you are genuine in your approach to children and follow through on what you say you will do – credibility needs to be earned and can be easily lost.



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