

Rationale.

Malmsbury 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.

We 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 policies and procedures.

We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we have a concern about a child's safety.

Our school is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks. Our school has recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers and is committed to regular training and education 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 a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background 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.

Aims

For our children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation. 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 organisation and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome including

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

For 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.

Implementation

Training and supervision

Training and education is 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 allegation of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff to 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; and 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 organisations 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 (please refer to this organisation's code of

conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through the 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 which 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 are open and accept all applications including from Aboriginal people, 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 website

www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au for further information and the schools' Working with Children policy.

All DET employees with a Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration are required to have National Name Check (NNC) and a WWCC. All other DET employees must have a current WWCC and any school employees handling finances are to have a NNC.

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 transparent and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form 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, the school, 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 to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how information is recorded, what will be done with it and who will have access.

Legislative responsibilities

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously including:

- Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties.
- Failure to disclose an offence: In addition to mandatory reporting and duty of care obligations, any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 must report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence except in limited circumstances, such as where the information has already been reported to Child Protection or the child is over 16 when the belief is formed.
- Failure to protect: Any staff member in a position of authority, who becomes aware that an adult associated with their organisation (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the care, authority or supervision of the organisation, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk. This may include, for example, removing the adult from child-related work pending investigation. If a staff member in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence. The offence applies only to adults in a position of authority within an organisation, including Principals, senior school staff, regional directors and other senior managers.

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 protectively 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, and doors that can lock) and online environments (for example no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).

Every year the action plan will be revisited to review the effectiveness of the strategies we have in place.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Our organisation takes all allegations seriously and has practises 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 the 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

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed every three 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 work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Approved by School Council on: 26 October 2016.

Review Date 2019