

## Child Safe Standard 2

### Child Safe Policy

#### Rationale

The Child Safe Standards require organisations that provide services for children, including schools, to have a Child Safe Policy or a statement of commitment to child safety. A Child Safe Policy is an overarching document that provides an overview of the key elements of an organisation's approach to child safety. The policy:

- Clearly states the organisation's zero tolerance of child abuse
- Details the school's child safe processes and procedures, or link to existing documents that include child safety considerations. For example, its reporting procedures (including leadership responsibilities) and how to respond to an allegation of child abuse, human resources and recruitment practices, and risk management strategy and procedures
- Clearly states the school's commitment to cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability
- Details expectations and requirements of staff and volunteers to ensure the protection of children, and the training and support staff receive
- Includes contact details for people to access information in relation to child safety, such as the Primary Welfare Officer. A Primary Welfare Officer is a person in the organisation who has knowledge of child safety issues, and could be a point of contact for others who have questions or concerns or want to report an allegation of child abuse. The organisation must include the Primary Welfare Officer duties in the person's job description
- Includes how and when the policy and other child safety tools are reviewed to help the organisation improve.

#### Purpose

- To ensure Mackellar Primary School (MPS) demonstrates its commitment to creating a child safe environment
- To raise awareness within the school community of the importance of child safety
- To empower students who are key stakeholders within our organisation
- To ensure the school develops and publishes a child safe policy that is compliant with the child safe standard
- To ensure the school discharges its duty of care towards students.

#### Implementation

- MPS is committed to providing the highest level of child safety and protection for children in our care. The welfare of the children in our care is our first priority
- We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff, volunteers and the parent community

- This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, children and individuals involved in our school
- MPS is committed to the principles of safety of Aboriginal children if applicable, to the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability, and we recognise that all of these principles support the safety of all children
- **MPS has zero tolerance of child abuse**, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures
- MPS is committed to preventing child abuse, identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

**Any staff member who believes that a child is at immediate risk of abuse must phone 000**

- MPS has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers
- MPS is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks
- MPS have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments
- Our school's Child Safe Policy will be publicly available to help raise awareness about the importance of child safety in our organisation and demonstrate our commitment to protecting children from abuse. It will be published on the school's website and provided to new families on enrolment
- New staff will be provided with a copy and briefed on the school's attitude to child safety as part of the induction process
- We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute to the development and review of this policy. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

### **Children's Rights to Safety and Participation**

This policy is intended to empower and protect our children who are vital and active participants in the school.

- We actively seek to include the voices of children in our organisational planning, delivery of services, management of facilities and assessment procedures. We actively seek to understand what makes children feel safe. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say. For example, children have a digital copy of the Protect poster and it is also visually displayed around the school and referred during regular discussions and conversations about what makes them feel safe. Through Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships Education, specific 'Help Seeking' lessons enable children to describe and apply strategies that can make them feel comfortable or unsafe. They explore the notion of trust and how they know they can trust someone. Through the 'Helping hands' activity, students list five trusted people they would seek help from and five, as well as five people they can help

- Any proposed significant changes to the physical environment, policies, procedures, programs or staffing are discussed with children, who are encouraged to provide their views.

### **Valuing Diversity**

MPS values diversity and does not tolerate discriminatory practices. We promote diversity and tolerance, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome.

Specifically, 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 in all aspects of school life

We also:

- Seek to recruit appropriate staff from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Welcome same-sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse cultures
- Commit to ensuring our facilities promote inclusion of children of all abilities.

### **Our Staff and Volunteers**

The Staff Code of Conduct policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with the children in our school. All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our Staff Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. Staff, volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Staff Code of Conduct.

### **Training and Supervision**

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in the school understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility. Our school 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 and volunteers 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, 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 and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our philosophy 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. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through the Principal directly to the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

## Recruitment

The school applies the best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff and volunteers. Recruitment procedures comply with The Department of Education Recruitment Selection and Procedures Policy.

We ensure that child safety requirements are addressed in the recruitment process through strategies including:

### *Deciding to recruit*

- Assess the level of contact and responsibility the role will have in regard to children
- National Police Checks and Working with Children Checks are required where roles have contact or responsibility for children and for roles that have influence or authority over children
- Assess the qualifications and prerequisites required to ensure the staff are appropriately skilled for the role
- Assess the training, guidance and supervision required for the position and the current resources available to meet these requirements.

### *Advertising*

- 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
- Positions clearly state the responsibilities with regard to children
- 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
- Advertised positions will state that referee checks will be performed for shortlisted candidates.

### *Selection*

- Where a position includes responsibility for children or is a position of leadership, interview questions will address experience and previous engagement with children and will gauge the applicant's attitude and values towards children
- Before commencing in their role, successful applicants must sign the Child Safe Code of Conduct and attend an induction session about child safety and child abuse reporting and policies procedures.

## Supporting Staff and Volunteers

Mackellar Primary School is committed to ensuring that all leaders, staff and volunteers receive training to ensure that they understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety. The school assists its leaders, staff and volunteers to incorporate child safety considerations into decision-making and to promote a culturally safe environment where children are empowered to speak up about issues that affect them.

Mandatory training requirements for all Mackellar Primary School leaders, staff and volunteers are as follows:

- Induction: Child Safe Code of Conduct and Child Safe Policy
- Identifying indicators of child abuse
- How to respond to disclosures of child abuse, complaint, Code of Conduct breach and child safety incident reporting procedures.

As these training courses are essential to support Mackellar Primary School's zero tolerance of child abuse approach, leaders, staff and volunteers includes (but is not limited to):

- Risk management practices in relation to child safety
- Creating cultural safety for Aboriginal and culturally and/or linguistically diverse children
- Investigating child abuse concerns and allegations.

### **Child Safety Person**

The Mackellar Primary School Principal and Primary Welfare Officer have the specific responsibility for responding to any complaints made by staff, volunteers, parents or children.

### **Reporting Procedures**

The Mackellar Primary School Incident Reporting Policy and Framework includes how to respond to an allegation or incident of child abuse, and includes the following elements:

- If a staff member, volunteer or contractor becomes aware of an incident or allegation of abuse, the first responsibility is to ensure that the child or children are safe and the risks of further abuse or harm are mitigated. If the incident or allegation of abuse could involve criminal conduct, the matter must be immediately reported to Victoria Police. If there is any ongoing risk to a child or children, then the staff member or volunteer should immediately call 000. It may also be appropriate to notify the Department of Health and Human Services if there is a belief that a child is in need of protection. This may involve notifications to the police or Child Protection
- All reports of child abuse will be treated as serious, whether they are made by an adult or a child
- When an allegation of child abuse is received, all mandatory reporting requirements must be met, including reporting to police, DHHS, the Commission for Children and Young People under the Reportable Conduct Scheme or other government departments or regulators, as appropriate.

### **Fair Procedures for Personnel**

Whilst the safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern, we also are 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 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 families (as appropriate) on progress and any actions we take.

## Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they are 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, and who will have access to it.

## Legislative Responsibilities

The school takes its 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.

**Failure to protect:** People of authority will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

All teachers are **mandatory reporters** and must comply with their responsibilities.

Non-teaching staff have an obligation to report if they form a reasonable belief that a child is at risk of harm.

## Record Keeping and Incident Monitoring

Mackellar Primary School has a Records Management Policy and is committed to best practice record keeping:

- in accordance with the Records Management Policy, all reports of child abuse shall be recorded within the incident reporting system
- in accordance with legislation, confidentiality and privacy is maintained on records of child abuse, for children and families
- records will be retained in line with the recommendations from the Office of Public Records
- reports of child abuse and complaints about child safety are identified in complaints and reports of abuse will be reviewed and incorporated into the relevant Risk Management Plan.

## 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:

- Environmental risks (e.g. areas that might obscure a line sight or any doors that can lock) and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with

- a child in our school on social media)
- Vulnerability risks posed (such as activities that may foster personal relationships between staff/volunteers and children who have an increased risk of being exploited, such as children who are highly vulnerable and dependent on the staff/volunteer for their needs)
  - Identified risks of child abuse are actively reduced by designing and implementing appropriate, preventative measures
  - Risk Management Plans are documented for all existing and new activities and facilities
  - Staff, volunteers and contractors are made aware of their responsibility for identifying risks of child abuse and their obligation to work with management in reducing those risks
  - Families and children are made aware of how to report on identified risks of child abuse
  - Risk Management Plans are living documents that are updated as required, referred to regularly and reviewed periodically.

Please refer also to the school's existing policies all of which are designed to create a safe environment for children:

- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Statement of Values
- Volunteers - Working with Children Checks Policy
- Visitors to the School Policy
- Police & DHHS Interviews Policy
- Schools' Privacy Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Digital Learning Policy
- Mobile Phones - Student Use Policy
- Internet & Social Media Policy

#### **Further information and resources**

Department's Policy and Advisory Library:

- Equal Opportunity and Human Rights – Students  
<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/equal-opportunity-human-rights-students/policy>
- Reporting and Managing School Incidents  
<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/reporting-and-managing-school-incidents-including-emergencies/policy>
- Emergency and Critical Incident Management Planning  
<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/emergency-critical-incident-management-planning/policy>
- Risk Management  
<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/risk-management-schools/policy>
- Records Management – School Records  
<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/records-management/policy>



### **Non-compliance with this policy and the Code of Conduct**

Mackellar Primary School will enforce this policy and the Code of Conduct. Following any non-compliance, we will instigate a review that may result in restriction of duties, suspension or termination of employment or other corrective action.

### **Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle, following a significant incident if it occurs or if guidelines change. 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.

This policy was ratified by School Council on .....

Name: .....

Signature: .....

### References:

Child Safe Standards Toolkit  
A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Standard Organisation – Fourth Edition  
Amplify - <https://www.education.vic.gov.au>

