

## **Child Safe Standard 7**

### **Strategies to Promote the Participation and Empowerment of Children**

#### **Rationale**

Mackellar Primary School has a whole school approach to empowerment and participation of students. Empowerment – by helping the children have their say and, Participation – by giving them an opportunity to have a say about issues and concerns that affect them.

Becoming a Child Safe school means developing strategies to communicate and engage with all children who are involved with our school. It is important to ask our children when they feel safe, and when they feel unsafe.

As 'trusted adults' we ensure that our children's voices are heard, respected and valued. We encourage, listen and support our children when they speak up about issues of safety and wellbeing.

By enabling the participation of our children in our school we are:

- demonstrating our commitment to upholding the rights of children
- strengthening the commitment of children in our school
- building the communication and leadership skills of children – Student Representative Council (Prep to Grade 6), Peer Mediators, eSmart Ambassadors and Student Helpers
- building cultural understanding and respect
- enhancing the safety of children.

At Mackellar Primary School, we teach our children about their rights, to recognise what abuse is and understand it is not okay and that they can do something about it (age appropriate). We talk to our children about safety; both physical (the environment around them) and psychological (feeling, valued, respected and cared for).

#### **Empower and promote the participation of children in decision-making**

Mackellar Primary School promotes the involvement and participation of children in developing and maintaining child safe environments through a proactive and preventative approach to empowering children to protect themselves. Educators:

- promote student agency, student leadership and student voice are part of the school's current Strategic Plan
- use Amplify as a guide to empower students in decision-making through conversations, collaboration and specific actions
- create a positive climate for learning by empowering students, enhancing student engagement and enriching their participation
- empower and support students to take ownership of their learning and learning growth
- ask children what makes them feel safe and unsafe
- educate children to recognise abuse in an age-appropriate way that can help them to avoid situations that might put them at risk
- provide opportunities for children to express their views on our school's Child Safe Policy or Code of Conduct, and then incorporate this feedback to improve our policies and practices. Ideas from children are sought through conversations and feedback sessions

- educate social and emotional learning through programs such as The Resilience Project and Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships where children are empowered to express their concerns if something doesn't 'look, sound or feel safe,' consistent with the messages communicated in Protect posters (located in all indoor learning spaces) and also in the school's School-wide Positive Behaviour matrices.

We work on the premise of primary prevention in giving our children strategies through the following whole school programs/approaches/policies:

- Be You Schools Framework
- School-wide Positive Behaviour Support Framework
- School-wide Positive Behaviour Support Matrices (textual and visual) that communicate the school's values and expected behaviours in multiple settings
- eSmart School – Cyber safety
- Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships – Social and emotional learning
- The Resilience Project – Social and emotional learning
- Better Buddies Program – Alannah and Madeliene Foundation
- Student Leadership
- Drug Education
- Sexuality Education
- Inclusion Programs (Life Skills, Language, Sexuality Education and Interest-based)
- Transition
- Digital Technologies and Policies
- Student Attendance Policy
- Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy

As a school, we have implemented strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children in our school such as:

- providing children with child-appropriate and accessible information about what child abuse is, their rights to make decisions about their body and their privacy, that no one has a right to abuse them, and how they can raise concerns about abuse
- ensuring information and processes for reporting concerns are accessible to all children, for example by having procedures that are able to be accessed and understood
- ensuring information and processes for reporting concerns are culturally appropriate for Aboriginal children
- considering access and culturally appropriate language, photographs and artwork for Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability when drafting communications materials
- translating school organisational information such as School Newsletter into relevant community languages, including relevant Aboriginal languages when required
- gathering feedback from children through surveys such as the Student Attitude to School and The Resilience Project regarding their connectedness to peers, safety and wellbeing and implement improvements based on this feedback
- enabling children to express their views and make suggestions on what child safety means to them

- providing professional learning for staff on methods of empowering children and encouraging children's participation
- raising awareness in the community about children's rights, for example through staff conversations with families and communications such as websites and newsletters.

Mackellar Primary School promotes Visible Learning, where children are able to articulate what they are learning, how they know they will be successful, how well they are going and what their next steps are for learning. Students are involved in their education, engaging them in their learning and assessment. Students are empowered to learning by setting individual learning goals. These goals are developed, reviewed and monitored in collaboration with the classroom teacher and Education Support Officer (where applicable). The goals are directed at student's specific learning needs to enable them to grow and improve. Visible Learning at Mackellar Primary School allows every student to be empowered and to participate in their education. They are critically engaged in their learning, their progress and their next steps for learning.

#### **Resources:**

- Protect Poster and Feeling Safe Protect (document for children)
- Amplify (student agency, voice and leadership)
- Be You Beyond Blue
- Kids Helpline
- School Matrices (visual and textual) values and expectations across multiple settings
- Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships
- The Resilience Project
- The Alannah and Madeline Foundation – eSmart Schools
- eSafety Commission of Australia
- Building Resilience: A model to support children and young people
- Catching on Early
- Child Wise Personal Safety Education Program
- Body Safety Australia
- Safe Schools Hub for Students
- Healthy Together Achievement Program
- Sexuality Education
- Child Protection Toolkit
- Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy
- Educate to Empower
- Child Wise Personal Safety Education Program

**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

