

CHILD SAFE POLICY

POLICY – 2020

PURPOSE:

The Victorian Government has introduced child safe standards to improve the way schools and other organisations prevent and respond to child abuse that may occur within their organisation.

- The standards are compulsory and will assist Myrniong Primary School to:
- prevent child abuse
- encourage reporting of any abuse that does occur
- improve responses to any allegations of child abuse

The child safe standards are a central feature of the Victorian Government's response to the Family and Community Development Committee of the Victorian Parliament's *Betrayal of Trust: Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations* (Betrayal of Trust Inquiry).

ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES

The Principal and the School Council are responsible for developing strategies that embed an organisational culture of child safety at Myrniong Primary School (PS). These strategies will give the highest priority to the promotion and protection of a child's safety, health, development, education and wellbeing.

Everyone involved in Myrniong PS has a role to play and is responsible for protecting children and upholding the duty of care that Myrniong PS owes to all of its students.

All teaching staff have responsibilities in relation to child safety. Class teachers and the principal are responsible for receiving reports of suspicion of child abuse. The Principal will be notified of all reports and act as a child safety officer, being a point of contact for all staff.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Our commitment to child safety

Myrniong 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 actively work to listen to and empower children.

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 robust policies and procedures.

We have systems to protect children from abuse, and will take all allegations and concerns very seriously and responds to them consistently in line with the organisation's policies and procedures.

We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

Myrniong Primary School is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

Myrniong Primary School has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.

Myrniong Primary School 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.

Suspected or actual abuse of children will be reported promptly to the appropriate authorities.

Support and assistance will be provided to children who have suffered abuse and to their families.

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

Our children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants at Myrniong Primary 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.

For standards of behaviour please see the Myrniong PS engagement policy.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. 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.

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 education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation 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 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; 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 Myrniong Primary School's 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 appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter

Recruitment (refer to staff selection checklist)

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. Myrning Primary School understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

All advertisements will include a message that outlines Myrning Primary School's commitment to Child Safety.

All Advertisements will provide a link to our school Code of Conduct and Child Safety policy

All advertisements will inform applicants that appropriate rigorous reference and background checks will be undertaken, including a working with children's check and police and identity check.

All advertisements will include 'This organisation promotes the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all children, including those with a disability. Applicants are welcome to elaborate on experience they may have working with children with a disability'.

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 website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> for further information.

We carry out face-to-face interviews that include behavioural-based questions and questions about motives for wanting to work with children.

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 are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do 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. All employees will be required to complete a police record check.

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 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 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

Myrning Primary School 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.¹

- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation 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.²
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.³
- If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident.

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 in organisations on social media).

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.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Myrniong Primary School 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 observed⁴
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

¹ A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed.

Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>.

² Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence>.

³ Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about how to make a report to child protection <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first>.

REFERENCE:

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/child-protection

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/health/Pages/childprotection.aspx

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/child-protection/protecting-children-together

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-service-providers/children%2c-youth-and-families/child-protection/specialist-practice-resources-for-child-protection-workers/child-development-and-trauma-specialist-practice-resource

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/586465/information-guide-registered-teachers-principals.pdf

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/child-protection/about-child-abuse

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to the community annually through the newsletter and placed on the school Website.

EVALUATION:

This policy will be reviewed;

- as soon as possible after a serious incident occurs at school,
- or as part of the school's three year review cycle.

This policy was ratified by School Council on 16th June, 2020.

APPENDIX: Appendix A: Child Safe Code of Conduct

Appendix B: Child Safe incident report template

Appendix C: Staff selection Check List

Child Safe Code of Conduct

All staff, volunteers, parents and council members of Myrning Primary School are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below.

All personnel of Myrning Primary School are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:

- adhering to Myrning Primary School child safe policy at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating everyone with respect
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal child's self-identification)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination)
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities)
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to Myrning Primary School's Child Safety Officer (The Principal), and ensure any allegation is reported to the police or child protection
- reporting any child safety concerns at Myrning Primary School to the Child Safety Officer (The Principal)
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe
- encouraging children to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.

Staff and volunteers must not:

- develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps. Sitting on laps could be appropriate sometimes, for example while reading a storybook to a small child in an open plan area)
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)
- do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities)
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability
- have contact with a child or their family outside of our organisation without our child safety officer's knowledge and/or consent (for example, no babysitting). Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate)
- have any online contact with a child or their family (unless necessary, for example providing families with e-newsletters)
- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

By observing these standards you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to MYRNING PRIMARY SCHOOL Child Safety Officer (The Principal / leadership).

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

I agree to adhere to this Code of Conduct:

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Myrniong PS Incident Report

Child safe standards toolkit: resource seven

Please complete and give to principal to be stored. A discussion will take place immediately based around our Child Safe Policy.

Incident details

Date of incident:	
Time of incident:	
Location of incident:	
Name(s) of child/children involved:	
Name(s) of staff/volunteer involved:	

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

Does the child identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

(Mark with an 'X' as applicable)

No Yes, Aboriginal Yes, Torres Strait Islander

Please categorise the incident

Physical violence

Sexual offence

Serious emotional or psychological abuse

Serious neglect

Please describe the incident

When did it take place?	
Who was involved?	
What did you see?	
Other information	

Parent/carer/child use

Date of incident:	
Time of incident:	
Location of incident:	
Name(s) of child/children involved:	
Name(s) of staff/volunteer involved:	

Office use:

Date incident report received:	
Staff member managing incident:	
Follow-up date:	
Incident ref. number:	

Has the incident been reported?

Child protection	
Police	
Another third party (please specify):	

Incident reporter wishes to remain anonymous?

(Mark with an 'X' as applicable)

Yes No



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Staff Selection Checklist

PRE SELECTION		y/n
Create Position Description	<i>This must reflect child safety standards (refer to CSS policy)</i>	
Applicants to be informed about Child Safety practices and Code of Conduct	<i>Refer them to website in advertisement</i>	
Inform applicants of background checks in advertisement.	<i>Inform applicants that the selection process will involve a rigorous background check – WWCC (teachers registered with VIT do not need WWCC)</i>	
SCREENING / BACKGROUND CHECK		
Check two forms of personal identification	<i>Is the name the same as that of the applicant?</i>	
Transcript / qualification check	<i>Does the applicant have original transcript or qualifications confirming their claims about qualifications or registrations?</i>	
Verify VIT registration	<i>Verify and ensure that it is current</i>	
Check employment history	<i>Are there any unexplained gaps in the applicant employment history? If so can it be explained satisfactorily by travel, study etc?</i>	
Conduct other background searches	<i>Facebook, LinkedIn, google?</i>	
Referee check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Most recent employer must be included and a direct line manager at a minimum. Referees must be objective and it should be noted if there is a personal relationship that may cloud judgement.</i> • <i>Check that work history and previous employment details provided are correct</i> • <i>Has the referee directly supervised the applicant and observed them work with children?</i> • <i>Would the referee employ this person again?</i> • <i>Did the referee have any concerns about the applicant working directly with children?</i> • <i>Did the referee have any concerns about the applicant adhering to the organisations code of conduct?</i> • <i>If it is a written reference, contact the referee to confirm authenticity.</i> • <i>Does the applicant have experience working with children outside their employment (volunteering, tutoring, coaching etc)?</i> 	
HIRE		
Follow Department Hire employment checklist		