

CANTERBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL

4.15 CHILD SAFE POLICY

OVERVIEW OF THIS DOCUMENT

The Child Safe Policy outlines the guiding principles and programs employed by Canterbury Primary School to develop a Child Safe Culture, as well as links to Department of Education and Training (DET) and other references.

1. RATIONALE

Canterbury 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.

2. GOALS

- (a) Zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- (b) Rigorously comply with legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we have a reasonable suspicion that a child may be abused or groomed for abuse, or are otherwise concerned about a child's safety.
- (c) Commitment to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- (d) Ensuring Canterbury Primary School has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- (e) Ensuring Canterbury Primary School is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

3. CHILD SAFE PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

- (a) Refer to the CANTERBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD PROTECTION REPORTING POLICY.
- (b) Refer to the STUDENT WELLBEING section of the staff handbook for information on mandatory reporting for staff.
- (c) Refer to the RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY for information on how risks are managed at Canterbury Primary School.
- (d) Refer to the Canterbury Primary School Code of Conduct and Statements of commitment to Child Safety.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

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 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.

Any adult in connection with the Canterbury Primary School students who believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse must report this to police. It is essential that the Principal is made aware of the report. The school Principal will offer support and guidance in making a report to police. If this adult is dissatisfied

with the Principal's response or there is inactivity on the Principals part and the adult still believes a child is at risk of harm they must report the incident to police.

5. OUR CHILDREN

This policy is intended to empower children, who are vital and active participants at Canterbury 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.

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

- (a) promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children;
- (b) promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- (c) ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate in the programs by implementing reasonable adjustments to the programs.

6. 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 sign and 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.

7. TRAINING

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 to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse, and to comply with their reporting obligations. We require our volunteers to read and sign our code of conduct prior to working with students in our school and to comply with their reporting obligations.

We 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 Canterbury 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 the School's Child Safety Code of Conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further.)

8. RECRUITMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES PRACTICES

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people committed to child safety to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our moral and legislative responsibilities. Canterbury Primary School understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We 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 <http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> for further information.

We carry out reference checks and require teachers to hold a current Victorian Institute of Teaching registration, including the mandatory police record checks, to ensure that we are recruiting the right people.

We gather verify and record the following information and documents prior to engaging staff to perform child-connected work.

- (a) current Victorian Institute of Teaching status including the Working with Children and criminal record 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.**

We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision making process.

9. FAIR PROCEDURES FOR PERSONNEL

The safety and wellbeing of children is our paramount concern. We are also fair and just to personnel, bearing in mind this concern. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing risk, and undertaking protective or disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence and consultation with other agencies, including Victoria Police and the Department.

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.

10. 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 information about them is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

11. LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

Canterbury Primary School takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- (a) 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.
- (b) 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.
- (c) Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties under the relevant legislation. See the School's Child Safety Reporting Policy.

12. 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 other than school specified online tools for specific purposes linked to learning and specified by the teacher). These risks will be recorded in the Risk Register (see Policy 3.14)

13. ALLEGATIONS, CONCERNS, COMPLAINTS AND REPORTING

Canterbury Primary School takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to act quickly in circumstances where suspicion of abuse exists. Our staff and trained to deal appropriately with allegations of abuse and volunteers at the school must sign and agree to a set of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours before they help at school.

Any person who has a reasonable suspicion that child abuse (including grooming) may be occurring **is required by law to immediately report the behaviour to Victoria Police**. Staff must also report to Department of Health and Human Services.

Support for staff and volunteers in making a report, or requiring assistance to determine whether to make a report is available from the Principal and in their absence the Assistant Principal.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or grooming, are a victim, and if they notice behaviour which they find concerning.

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 to the appropriate authorities immediately. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- (a) a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- (b) behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- (c) someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- (d) observing concerning behaviour.

The Principal, and in their absence the Assistant Principal, is the child safety officer and is responsible for the monitoring and overall compliance with the reporting of concerns of child abuse and the implementation of the response procedure.

14. EVALUATIONS

This policy will be reviewed with student, parent and community input as part of the school's Education Committee review process.

STATUS: RATIFIED BY SCHOOL COUNCIL - NOVEMBER 2016