



Child Safe POLICY

Rationale

Officer Primary School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children. Our school community recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development.

Background

On 26 November 2015, the Victorian Parliament passed the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015 to introduce seven child safe standards (the Standards) into law. The Standards apply to all organisations involved in child-related work in Victoria, with the aim of promoting cultural change in the way organisations manage the risk of child abuse and neglect.

The Child Safe Standards

Standard 1: *Organisations must have strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements.*

Officer Primary School has a responsibility to ensure that policies and procedures demonstrate zero tolerance of child abuse at our school. The school community is informed about the strategies and practices around child safety and we periodically review the effectiveness of the strategies put into practice and, if considered appropriate, revise those strategies.

Standard 2: *Organisations must have a child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety.*

Officer Primary School's policies and procedures provide the foundation for and commitment to child safety in our school. Our values and principles have guided our school in developing policies and procedures to create and maintain a child safe school environment. Staff, parents/carers and children are supported and encouraged. They are able to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters. We will support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are linked to suspected child abuse.

Standard 3: *Organisations must have a code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.*

All staff at Officer Primary School are covered by a code of conduct which addresses child safety. We have recognised and considered existing professional codes of conduct when developing our Child Safety Codes of Conduct. Our Codes of Conduct promotes child safety in the school environment by setting standards about the ways in which adults are expected to behave with children.

Standard 4: *Organisations must have screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel. Organisations must ensure that recruitment processes are in place to manage and reduce the risk of child abuse. In addition, processes must be in place to ensure that there are appropriate staff induction programs, staff professional development and staff supervision arrangements to ensure a child safe environment*

Each job or category of jobs for Officer Primary School staff that involves child connected work will have a clear statement that sets out the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety, and the job occupant's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety. New school staff will be inducted in the school's policies, codes, practices, and procedures governing child safety and child connected work.

Standard 5: *Organisations must have processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.*

Officer Primary School's policies and procedures for reporting and responding to suspected child abuse enables individuals to take the appropriate course of action to protect the safety of students. We will respond appropriately to a child who makes or is affected by an allegation of child abuse by informing the appropriate authorities about the allegation, protecting any child connected to the alleged child abuse until the allegation is resolved and making, securing, and retaining records of the allegation of child abuse and the school's response to it.

Standard 6: *Organisations must have strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse. The organisation governing authority must develop, implement, monitor and evaluate risk management strategies to ensure child safety in the organisation's environments.*

As part of our risk management strategy and practices, Officer Primary School will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of our risk controls. At least annually, the School Leadership will ensure that appropriate guidance and training is provided to staff about their obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse, child abuse risks in the school environment and the school's current child safety standards.

Standard 7: *Organisations must have strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children. We must ensure that children feel safe to report abuse and have processes in place to ensure that students are empowered to raise any child safety concerns. Organisations must support students to develop appropriate knowledge and skills so that children can identify and communicate when they don't feel safe.*

Officer Primary School will deliver appropriate education about standards of behaviour for students attending the school, healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality), resilience and child abuse awareness and prevention.

Policy

Officer Primary School implements the Child Safe Standards to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all our students. We promote an organisational culture that manages the risk of child abuse and neglect.

Our school has developed policies and procedures that aim to keep our students safe. The standards will provide a framework to identify gaps and improve policy and practices around child safety.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: School Child Safe Definitions

Appendix 2: Our commitment to Child Safety

Appendix 3: Child Safety Code of Conduct

Appendix 4: Child Safety Risk Management Program

Appendix 1:

Officer Primary School **School Child Safe Definitions:**

Definitions

A full list of definitions for Ministerial Order No. 870 is available at www.vrqa.vic.gov/childsafe

Child abuse includes –

Any act committed against a child involving-

- A sexual offence or
- An offence under Section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)

The infliction on a child, of -

- Physical violence or
- Serious emotional or psychological harm or
- Serious neglect of a child

Child – connected work means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child Safety encompasses matters related to protecting children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including;

- A campus of the school
- Online school environments (including e-mail and intranet systems)
- Other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events)

School staff means, in a government school, an individual working in a school environment who is;

- Employed under Part 2.4 of The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (ETR Act) in the government teaching service or
- Employed under a contract of service by the council of the school under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act or
- A volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary).

School governing authority means;

- The proprietor of a school, including a person authorised to act for or on behalf of the proprietor; or
- The governing body for a school (however described), as authorised by the proprietor of a school or the ETR Act; or
- The principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school, the school governing body, or the ETR Act.

Appendix 2:

Officer Primary School **Our commitment to Child Safety**

Officer Primary School is committed to child safety. We want all children to be safe, happy and empowered. We are supportive and respectful of all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We have zero tolerance of child abuse. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously and consistently following our policies and procedures.

Our school is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early. We have robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers. We are committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

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

We support and respect all children, staff and volunteers. We are dedicated to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability,

Officer Primary School has 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

This policy guides staff and volunteers on how to behave with the children in our school. All staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

Training and Supervision

Training and education ensures that everyone in our school understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility. We aim to have a culture where all staff, volunteers, parents/carers and children feel safe, comfortable and confident in discussing child abuse and child safety issues. We train our staff to identify, assess and minimise the risks of child abuse and to be aware of the potential signs of abuse. We support our staff and volunteers to develop their skills to protect children from abuse, promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and those from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background and ensure the safety of children with a disability. New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our commitment to child safety and that they comply with our Code of Conduct.

Any inappropriate behaviour by staff or volunteers will be reported through the appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police.

Recruitment

At officer Primary School we take steps to employ skilled people to work with our children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our dedication to child safety.

All staff and volunteers engaged in child-related work must hold a Working with Children Check and must provide evidence of the Check (www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au).

Reference and police record (only for recruitment) checks will be carried out as a matter of routine to ensure we are recruiting the right people. If, during the recruitment process, a criminal history is found, the applicant will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

Fair procedures for personnel

While the safety and wellbeing of our children is our highest priority, we are also fair and just with our personnel. Decisions made when recruiting, assessing incidents and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent and evidence-based. We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our Incident Reporting Form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

Privacy

The privacy of individuals (staff, volunteers, parents and children) involved will be respected when information is considered or recorded unless there is risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure personal information is protected.

Legislative responsibilities

Officer Primary School takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including;

- All Victorian Teachers have a **legal responsibility** to report incidents where children's safety is at risk. Victorian Government School employees are expected to follow DET Mandatory Reporting policy (<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/childprotection.aspx>)
- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Australia 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 in our school will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power and responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

Risk management

In Victoria, schools are required to protect children when a risk is identified. We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess and act to minimise child abuse risks. These risks include those posed by physical environments (such as doors that can't lock) and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in schools on social media).

Allegations, concerns and complaints

We take all allegations seriously at Officer Primary School and our staff and volunteers are trained to deal with allegations appropriately.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers understand what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim of abuse, or if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have an obligation to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred.

Reasonable belief

Factors contributing to a 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

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years and following significant incidents if they occur.

Appendix 3:

Officer Primary School **Child Safety Code of Conduct**

The following code of conduct clearly defines the professional boundaries and acceptable and unacceptable adult/child relationships and behaviours. All staff members at our school are expected to have read and implemented the following Child Safety Code of Conduct at all times.

Making a professional judgement

Adults at Officer Primary School will;

- Be aware of their position of trust
- Ensure an unequal balance of power is not used for their own or others advantage or gratification
- Never use their position to bully, intimidate, humiliate, threaten, coerce or undermine children
- Make judgements about their behaviour to ensure the best interests and welfare of the child are maintained
- Record interactions and share them with a member of the Principal Class
- Ensure actions taken are warranted, proportionate, safe and fairly applied
- Discuss any misunderstandings, accidents or threats with a leadership team member
- Maintain professional conduct and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others
- Not promote adult/child relationships which create a personal friendship or are a sexual nature, or which may become so.

Personal/living space

Adults at Officer Primary School will;

- Not invite a child into their home or any home or domestic setting frequented by them, unless the reason for this has been firmly established and agreed with by parents and the Principal Class
- Be vigilant in maintaining their own privacy, particularly when using social media
- Be mindful of the need to avoid placing themselves in vulnerable situations
- Never ask children to undertake personal jobs or errands
- Always maintain professional boundaries

Gifts, rewards and favouritism

Adults at Officer Primary School will;

- Be aware of our policy of giving and receiving gifts
- Ensure that gifts given or received in situations that may be misconstrued are declared to the Principal Class
- Only give gifts to an individual child as part of an agreed reward system
- Ensure that reward systems, methods and criteria for selection of children for awards are fair and transparent

Infatuations

Adults at Officer Primary School will;

- Handle infatuations sensitively and appropriately to ensure the dignity and safety of all those concerned
- Make sure their own behaviour is beyond reproach
- Upon becoming aware of an infatuation developing, they will record it and discuss the matter with School Leadership so that action can be taken to avoid any hurt, distress or embarrassment.

Communication (including the use of technology)

Adults at Officer Primary School will;

- Ensure that communication takes place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. This includes the wider use of technology such as mobile phones, text messaging, e-mail, cameras, videos, web-cam, websites and blogs
- Not share any personal information with a child
- Not request or respond to any personal information from a child, other than that which may be appropriate in their professional role
- Not give their personal contact details to a child unless the need to do so is agreed with School Leadership and parents. This includes mobile/home phone numbers, personal e-mail addresses or social media contacts
- Only use equipment e.g. mobile phones, provided by Officer Primary School to communicate with children. Ensure that parents/carers and the Principal Class have given permission for this form of communication to be used
- Only make contact with children for professional reasons and in accordance with school policy
- Only use text messaging as a last resort when no other forms of communication are available
- Not use internet or web-based communication channels to send messages
- Use internal e-mail systems and blogs in accordance with the school policy

Social contact

Adults at Officer Primary School will;

- Not have social contact with children unless the reason for this has been firmly established and agreed with parents and School Leadership
- Not have covert social contact with children and/or their parents
- Have any planned social contact with children approved by School Leadership
- Advise the Principal Class of any social contact that has occurred which may raise concern
- Report and record any situation which may place a child at risk or may compromise Officer Primary School or their own professional standing.

Sexual contact

Adults at Officer Primary School will;

- Not engage in sexual activity with, or in the presence of, a child. To do so would be a criminal offence
- Not cause or incite a child to engage in, or watch, sexual activity. To do so would be a criminal offence
- Not have any form of communication which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative
- Not make sexual remarks to, or about, a child either verbally, written or electronically
- Not discuss their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of, a child
- Ensure relationships take place within boundaries of respect and professionalism
- Ensure language, attitudes and demeanour do not give rise to comment or speculation
- Be aware that consistently conferring inappropriate special attention or favour upon a child might be construed as part of the grooming process and will generate concerns about their behaviour

Physical contact

Adults at Officer Primary School will;

- Be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the child, an observer or any person to whom the action is described
- Only have physical contact with a child when it is necessary and in ways which are appropriate to their professional or agreed role and responsibilities
- Never touch a child in a way which may be considered sexual or indecent
- Be aware of the child's reactions and feelings and, as far as possible, use only a level of contact which is acceptable to the child and only for the minimum amount of time necessary
- Seek permission from the child (or parent/carer if the child is very young) before physical contact is made and agree what contact is acceptable
- Not assume that when a child is distressed they need physical comfort
- Always be prepared to report, explain actions and accept that all physical contact is open to scrutiny
- Not indulge in horse play
- Always encourage children, where possible to undertake self-care tasks independently
- Be aware and respectful of cultural or religious views about touching and sensitive to the issues of gender
- Where there is regular physical contact needed, the nature of this must be agreed with School Leadership and the parent/carer as part of a formal plan
- Where a child initiates inappropriate physical contact, you must deter them with sensitivity and help them understand the importance of personal boundaries

Behaviour management

Adults at Officer Primary School will;

- Never use corporal punishment
- Try to diffuse situations before they escalate
- Follow the behaviour policy and only use physical intervention in exceptional circumstances and as a last resort, when other behaviour management strategies have failed and where there is a risk of physical injury to the child or others, or serious damage to property.
- When using physical intervention, use the minimum force necessary and techniques in line with recommended policy and practice
- Always report and document any incident involving physical intervention
- Ensure that any punishment is not degrading to the child
- Not use sarcastic, degrading or insensitive comments
- Make certain any sanctions or rewards are part of an agreed behaviour management policy
- Be mindful of other factors which may be impacting on a child's behaviour, for example bullying or changes in home circumstances

The use of unwarranted physical force is likely to constitute a criminal offence

Personal/Intimate Care

Adults at Officer Primary School will;

- Adhere to the school's Code of Conduct
- Make other staff aware of the task being undertaken
- Explain to the child what is happening
- Treat the child with sensitivity and respect and value their privacy at all times
- Carefully observe the responses of the child and record and report any concerns to the Principal Class, and parents if appropriate
- Avoid any physical contact when children are in a state of undress other than as a part of a care plan which has been agreed upon by School Leadership and the parent/carer
- Not change in the same place as children
- Not shower or bathe with children
- Not assist with any personal care task which a child can undertake themselves

One to one situations/home visits

Adults at Officer Primary School will;

- Ensure that, when working alone with a child as an integral part of their role, full and appropriate risk assessment has been made and the role has been agreed upon with School Leadership
- Avoided meeting with a child in secluded areas
- Always inform colleagues and/or parents about one to one contact beforehand, assessing the need to have them present or close by
- Avoid the use of 'engaged' (or equivalent) signs wherever possible as these create an opportunity for secrecy, or the interpretation of secrecy
- Be considerate of the needs of the child in one to one situations and always report any situation where the child becomes distressed or angry towards you
- Agree upon the purpose of any home visit with School Leadership, unless it is an acknowledged and integral part of your role
- Never place yourself in a one to one situation when little or no information is available about the child

Transporting

Adults at Officer Primary School will;

- Ensure requirements around seat belts and car seats are adhered to, proper procedures are in place for vehicle, driver and passenger safety and that all private vehicles are registered and comprehensively insured
- Not offer students lifts outside normal working duties unless it has been agreed upon by School Leadership and parents/carers
- Ensure you are fit to drive and free from drugs, alcohol or medicine that is likely to impair your judgement or ability to drive
- Record the details of the journey in accordance with DET procedures
- Ensure that any impromptu or emergency lifts are recorded and can be justified if questioned

Trips and outings

Adults at Officer Primary School will;

- Recognise that they are in a position of trust and power and that their behaviour remains professional and stays clearly within defined boundaries at all times
- Ensure staff/child ratios and gender mix are appropriate
- Always have another adult present in out of work activities, unless otherwise agreed upon by School Leadership and parents/carers
- Make certain risk assessments are undertaken
- Have parental consent to the activity
- Never share beds with children
- Not share bedrooms unless it is a dormitory situation and the arrangements have been agreed upon with School Leadership, parents/carers and children

Photography and Videos

Adults at Officer Primary School will;

- Be clear about the purpose of any activity involving photography and/or videoing and what will happen to the images when the activity is concluded
- Be able to justify the reason for having images of children in their possession
- Avoid making images in one to one situations or situations that may be construed as secretive or inappropriate, or which show a single child with no surrounding context
- Only use equipment provided by, or authorised by, the school
- Immediately report any concerns if any inappropriate or intrusive images are discovered
- Have parental/carer consent to take, display and/or distribute any images of children
- Not use images which may cause distress, offence or humiliation
- Not use mobile phones or any other devices which have a camera to take images of children unless authorised by School Leadership

Access to inappropriate images and internet usage

Adults at Officer Primary School will;

- Not access, make, or store indecent images of children on devices or the internet.
To do so would be illegal and will lead to criminal charges
- Not make or store images of children, gathered as a result of their work, on personal equipment unless authorised by School Leadership
- Follow the school's guidance on the use of IT equipment
- Ensure that children are not exposed to unsuitable material through ICT and that all material is age appropriate
- If inappropriate or intrusive images are found, immediately report any concerns to the Principal Class and follow mandatory reporting policy

Appendix 4:

Officer Primary School
Child Safety Risk Management Program

At Officer Primary School our child safety risk management strategy involves a formal and structured approach to managing risks associated with child safety. Our Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct clearly outlines our commitment to implementing the 7 Standards for Child Safety as outlined in the Ministerial Order No. 870. Our process includes risk assessment (see below), implementation of controls and a monitoring and review process to ensure the applicability of the risk management approach.

Risk Rating Matrix

| RISK RATING | | Consequence | | | | |
|-------------|----------------|---------------|--------|----------|---------|---------|
| | | Insignificant | Minor | Moderate | Major | Severe |
| Likelihood | Almost Certain | Medium | High | Extreme | Extreme | Extreme |
| | Likely | Medium | Medium | High | Extreme | Extreme |
| | Possible | Low | Medium | Medium | High | Extreme |
| | Unlikely | Low | Low | Medium | Medium | High |
| | Rare | Low | Low | Low | Medium | Medium |

Child Safety Risks and Risk Management Strategies

The table below comprises a listing of potential child safety risks and risk management strategies

| Risks | Risk Management Strategies |
|--|--|
| Lack of an organisational culture of child safety Familiarity breeding a culture of non-reporting of issues Natural trust of long-term employees Children alone with one adult unsupervised Recruitment of an inappropriate person Inappropriate behaviour not reported Harassment via e-mail, SMS or other media Unsupervised recreational or other activities Ad-hoc contractors on the premises Vulnerability of staff and students due to known personal issues Unknown people and environments at excursions and camps False allegations | Implement an effective child safety risk management strategy Child Safety Code of Conduct Child safety reporting procedures Induction for all staff, volunteers, visitors and contractors Educate students and staff to detect inappropriate behaviour Counselling and other resources CCTV for unsupervised areas and 'hot spot' areas Clear windows in walls and doors to enable visibility of occupants Non-lockable doors in 'hot spots' Assessment of new or altered physical environments for child safety risks Supervision or monitoring of activities Online searches (Google, Facebook etc.) Performance management procedures Pre-employment reference checks Criminal history checks and confirming Working with Children Check completed and approved |

At Officer Primary School we believe that our in-depth Child Safe Policy's Code of Conduct enable for the monitoring of risk and risk management.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in **August 2018** and is scheduled for review In **August 2020**.