



WARRINGA PARK SCHOOL

Warringa Park School Child First Policy

Rationale

To help protect children from all forms of abuse Victoria has introduced compulsory minimum standards that apply to organisations that provide services for children. The child safe standards form part of the Victorian Government's response to the *Betrayal of Trust Inquiry*.

All Victorian schools are required to have a child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety which details:

- the principles that guide the school in developing policies and procedures to create and
- maintain a child safe school environment; and the actions the school proposes to take to:
 - demonstrate its commitment to child safety and monitor the school's adherence to its child safety policy
 - support, encourage and enable school staff, parents, and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters
 - support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.

Purpose

Child First is intended to promote child safety in the school environment and to create and maintain a child safe organization; an entity to which the standards apply must have -

- Strategies that embed a culture of child safety into the organization, including effective leadership arrangements
- A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety
- A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
- Screening, supervision, training and other human resource practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
- Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
- Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
- Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children

A Child Safety Code of Conduct:

To promote child safety in the school environment we acknowledge the following:

All students have a right to: -

- Take part in learning programs that meet their individual needs.
- Feel secure and to be safe in a caring and supportive environment.
- Work and play without interference in an atmosphere of harmony and cooperation.
- Receive respect, kindness and courtesy and to be treated with fairness.
- Have learning continue without disruption in a supportive environment.
- Be valued for their individuality including race, gender, and cultural, physical or intellectual diversity.
- Expect the school rules to be fair, consistently implemented and respect the rights of all involved.

All students have a responsibility to:

- Care and value themselves, others, teachers and the school community.
- Be safety conscious in relation to themselves and others.
- Treat others with respect and good manners in accordance with the school PBIS (Positive Behavior) expectations
- Adhere to the PBIS guidelines for appropriate behavior, modelling and supporting school rules.
- Develop a sense of ownership, self-reflection and accountability for their own actions.
- Work to achieve their personal best whilst allowing others to do the same.
- Allow for others to learn and to respect the rights of others.
- Explore their full potential in their learning.

School staff adheres to the following standards about the ways in which school staff are expected to behave with children:

- School staff provide opportunities for all students to learn
- School staff treat their students with respect and dignity in accordance with the schools PBIS culture
- School staff work within the limits of their professional expertise
- School staff maintain objectivity in their relationships with students
- School staff are always in a professional relationship with the students in their school whether at school or not
- Children will be respected and in no way degraded, endangered, exploited, intimidated or harmed psychologically or physically.

Implementation

It is the responsibility of the Principal to carefully monitor the supervision of children throughout the day and ensure that the following strategies are implemented:

- Individuals or groups of children are not permitted to be withdrawn into areas where they are not visible by other staff members or taken into rooms that can be locked.
- Staff are to be directed to ensure that they at all times remain readily accessible and within the visibility of other staff while with the children when possible.
- Students and volunteers are to be directed to ensure they are not alone with children in a direct, unsupervised capacity.
- A minimum of two staff to be on the premises while there is a child on the premises of a service
- Any major changes in behavior that are observed in children should be documented

Notify the Principal should you have any concerns regarding a child or adult's behaviour.

Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

- Risk management strategies have been developed within the following school policies:
 - Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedures Policy 2016
 - Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy 2016
 - Duty of Care Policy 2016
 - Code of Conduct Policy 2015

- **References:**

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/dutyofcare.aspx>

- If the school identifies risks of child abuse occurring in one or more school environments the authority must make a record of those risks and specify the action(s) the school will take to reduce or remove the risks (risk controls).

Explanatory note: Different risk controls may be necessary for particular groups of children depending on the nature of the risk and the diversity characteristics of children affected by the risk.

- As part of its risk management strategy and practices, the school must monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls.
- At least annually, the school must ensure that appropriate guidance and training is provided to the individual members of the school staff about:
 - individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse;
 - child abuse risks in the school environment
 - The school's current child safety standards.

Strategies to promote child empowerment and participation

- The school authority must develop strategies to deliver appropriate education about:
 - standards of behaviour for students attending the school
 - healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality)
 - resilience
 - child abuse awareness and prevention.
- The school must promote the child safety standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children.

Defining and Identifying Child Abuse

A child is defined as an unmarried person under the age of 18 years.

Child abuse generally falls into four categories.

1.1 Neglect

Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, medical care or attachment to and affection from adults.

The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that their well-being and/or development are severely affected.

1.2 Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is normally found in the relationship between a care-giver (an adult person who has responsibility for a child in the short or long term) and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's needs for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. It is rarely manifested in terms of physical symptoms. Children show signs of emotional abuse by their behaviour (for example excessive clinginess to or avoidance of the parent or carer), their emotional state (low self-esteem, unhappiness) or their development. The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and parent or carer.

1.3 Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or any injury that results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child. Examples of physical injury include-

- shaking
- use of excessive force in handling

- deliberate poisoning
- Suffocation
- Munchausen's Syndrome by proxy (where parents make up stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness)
- allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child

1.4 Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for their gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others. Examples of sexual abuse include-

- exposing sexual organs or intentionally performing any sexual act in the presence of a child
- Intentional touching or molesting the body of a child, by a person or object, for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
- masturbating in the presence of a child or involving the child in the act of masturbation
- engaging in sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal
- sexually exploiting a child
- consensual sexual activity between an adult and a child under 17 years

In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that, for the purposes of criminal law, the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years.

1.5 Aggressive Behaviour

While bullying is not a category in itself, it is important to be aware of it in relation to child abuse. Bullying can be defined as repeated verbal, psychological or physical aggression that is conducted by an individual or group against others. Bullying behaviour may take place in any setting - in schools, in the home or in a Children First setting.

As first response it is the responsibility of the Mentor/Staff Member to deal with bullying that may take place within the organisation. The more extreme forms of bullying behaviour would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse, and are reportable to the statutory authorities.

Incidents should not be tolerated under any circumstances and should be dealt with immediately. For more information on bullying, "Let's beat bullying" is a complete anti-bullying resource for those working with young people in youth work settings and is available as a download on www.youthhealth.ie.

Reporting Procedures

Procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of suspected child abuse:

Forming a belief on reasonable grounds

A person may form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection after becoming aware that a child or young person's health, safety or wellbeing is at risk.

Reporting a belief

Mandated staff members (Teachers and Principals) must make a report to Child Protection as soon as practicable after forming a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection.

Staff members, whether or not mandated, need to report to the principal or assistant principal their belief when the belief is formed in the course of undertaking their professional duties. A report must be made as soon as practicable after forming the belief and on each occasion on which they become aware of any further reasonable grounds for the belief.

If one staff member has a different view from another staff member about making a report and the staff member continues to hold the belief that a child is in need of protection, that person is obliged to make a report.

Please refer to the Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedures Policy 2016 for procedures in response to allegations of child abuse.

These procedures do not:

- prohibit or discourage school staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse to a person external to the school
- state or imply that it is the victim's responsibility to inform the police or other authorities of the allegation; require staff to make a judgment about the truth of the allegation of child abuse
- prohibit staff from making records in relation to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse.

Reporting Procedures

Children First provides an environment that encourages security, confidence and trust, so enabling young people to share their concerns. A young person will carefully select a person to confide in. That chosen person will be someone they trust and have confidence in. It is important that a young person who discloses child abuse feels supported and facilitated in what may be a frightening and traumatic process for them. A young person may feel perplexed, afraid, angry, despondent and guilty. It is important that any negative feelings they may have are not made worse by the kind of response they receive.

A young person who divulges child abuse has engaged in an act of trust and their disclosure must be treated with respect, sensitivity, urgency and care.

How to Respond

It is of the utmost importance that disclosures are treated in a sensitive and discreet manner. Anyone responding to a young person making such a disclosure should take the following steps.

- Take what the young person says seriously.
- React calmly, as over-reaction may intimidate the young person and increase any feelings of guilt that they may have.
- Reassure the young person that they were correct to tell somebody what happened.
- Listen carefully and attentively.
- Never ask leading, suggestive questions.
- Make interpretations about the information
- Use open-ended questions to clarify what is being said and try to avoid having them repeat what they have told you.
- Do not promise to keep secrets.
- Advise that you will offer support but if you judge the person to be at risk that you must pass on the information.
- Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser to the person reporting to you.
- Explain and make sure that the young person understands what will happen next.
- Do not confront the alleged abuser.
- Write down immediately after the conversation what was said, including all the names of those involved, what happened, where, when, if there were any witnesses and any other significant factors and note any visible marks on the individual making the report or any signs you observed.
- The person recording the event must sign and date all reports and indicate the time the notes were made.
- Ensure that the information is restricted to those who need to know it.

- Pass any allegations to the Designated Person immediately. Allegations should not be investigated by Children First staff, mentors or volunteers.

Code of Behaviour for Staff, Mentors, Volunteers and Participants Involved with children

- Mentors, volunteers and WPS staff should be sensitive to the risks involved in taking part in some contact sports with young people. They should exercise caution in areas such as swimming pools, showers, changing areas and so on.
- Mentors, volunteers and WPS staff should be sensitive to the fact that jokes of a sexual nature may be offensive to others and should never be told in the presence of young people.
- Mentors, volunteers and WPS staff should be sensitive to the implications of becoming too involved with or spending a lot of time with any one young person.
- Mentors, volunteers and WPS staff should be sensitive to the potential risk to personal safety that may arise when they meet alone with a young person in a room. Where it is feasible, they should leave the door open or inform another colleague that they will be alone in the room with the individual in question.
- Where a Mentor, volunteer or WPS staff member has a concern about the nature of a particular relationship involving themselves or another staff member, volunteer or young person, they should discuss it with a their Learning Centre Leader or experienced colleague.
- A Mentor, volunteer or WPS staff member should not have a physical relationship with a young person.
- Attempts should be made among young people to develop a positive attitude that respects the personal space, safety and privacy of their peers.
- If a Mentor, volunteer or WPS staff member provides transport for young people in the course of their involvement with children, there should, if possible, be two or more young people or another adult in the car.
- Any transport should only be provided with the full knowledge and consent of the young people's parents or guardians.
- Mentors, volunteers and WPS staff must never physically punish or be verbally abusive to a young person.
- The ratio of adult leaders to young people is important when doing various activities. There should be at least one adult to every ten participants and a minimum of two adults per group. This number may need to be varied in accordance with the ratio of male to female participants, the type of activity being undertaken and the ability of the participants.

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle but also occurs on a regular basis prompted by changing circumstances and raised concerns

This policy was last ratified by School Council in...

20/06/16