



CHILD SAFE

RATIONALE

Castlemaine Primary School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making. The school has zero tolerance of child abuse. We support and respect all children as well as our staff and volunteers.

Castlemaine Primary School is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people feel safe, and their voices are heard when decisions are being made that affect their lives. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and in providing a safe environment for children with a disability. We want all children at our school to be safe, happy and empowered.

Every person involved in Castlemaine Primary School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make. We have legal and moral obligations, which we follow rigorously, to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety.

PURPOSE

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

- the principles that will 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; and
- Support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.
- Ensure that child safety is considered in the recruitment, selection and management of staff (includes contractors, visitors and volunteers)

Ministerial Order No. 870 (available at www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe) states that

Child abuse includes –

- Any act committed against a child involving –
 - A sexual offence or
 - An offence under section 49 B (2) of the *Crimes Act 1958* (grooming)
- The infliction, on a child, of –
 - Physical violence or
 - Serious emotional or psychological harm
- Serious neglect of a child



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OUR CHILDREN

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants of the Castlemaine Primary School community. 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 school, 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.

Castlemaine Primary School staff will endeavour to deliver appropriate education about child abuse awareness and prevention to students through the use values education programs such as Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships. Promoting the Child Safe Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly for children

OUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our school.

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 school understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our school 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 our 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 with reference to the school's Code of Conduct. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including



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the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

RECRUITMENT

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. Our school understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

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](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> for further information

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, for the panel's consideration.

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 form¹, 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.



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LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

Castlemaine 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.²
- **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 or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.³
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.⁴

RISK MANAGEMENT

In Victoria, schools 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 schools on social media).

ALLEGATIONS, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

Castlemaine Primary School takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and promptly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure 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 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 observed
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.



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REGULAR REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed by School Council annually 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.

1 See resource seven in this toolkit.

2 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>.

3 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>.

4 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-childfirst>.

The child safe standards referred to throughout this policy are as follows:

Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements

Standard 2: A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety

Standard 3: A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children

Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel

Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

Guidance and information to assist services to understand the requirements of each of the child safe standards, is available on the [Department of Health and Human Services website](#)



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RELATED POLICIES

Volunteers and the Visitors policy
Staff Code of Conduct.
Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy
Supervision & Duty of Care
Excursion & Camp Policy

RELATED LEGISLATION

[Ministerial Order No. 870](#) (available at www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe)

DET RESOURCES

[An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards](#): <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc>

[The Child Safe Standards](#)

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/childsafestandards.aspx>

OTHER RESOURCES

[Victorian Registration & Assessment Authority](#) (VRQA):
<http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/Pages/default.html>