

## CHILD SAFE POLICY

### OUR COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Sunshine Heights Primary School, as an organization, 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. This includes staff and volunteers in organisations connected with the school such as Out of School Hours Care and providers of camps and excursions.

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

Our organisation is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

Our organisation has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.

Our organisation 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.

**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 in our organisation. 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:

- 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.

### RESPONSIBILITIES

Everyone employed or volunteering has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all students is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

The school has allocated roles and responsibilities for child safety as follows:

## Guide to Responsibilities of School Leadership

The principal, the school governing authority and school leaders recognise their particular responsibility to ensure the development of preventative and proactive strategies that promote a culture of openness, awareness of and shared responsibility for child safety. Responsibilities include:

- creating an environment for children and young people to be safe and to feel safe
- upholding high principles and standards for all staff, volunteers, and contractors
- promoting models of behaviour between adults and children and young people based on mutual respect and consideration
- ensuring thorough and rigorous practices are applied in the recruitment, screening and ongoing professional learning of staff
- ensuring that school personnel have regular and appropriate learning to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters
- providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm legislative obligations, policy and procedures in relation to child and young people's protection and wellbeing
- ensuring the school meets the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in [Ministerial Order No. 870](#).

## Guide to Responsibilities of School Staff

Responsibilities of school staff (school employees, volunteers and contractors) include:

- treating children and young people with dignity and respect, acting with propriety, providing a duty of care, and protecting children and young people in their care
- following the legislative and internal school processes in the course of their work, if they form a reasonable belief that a child or young person has been or is being abused or neglected
- providing a physically and psychologically safe environment where the wellbeing of children and young people is nurtured
- undertaking regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to child safety and the wellbeing of children and young people
- assisting children and young people to develop positive, responsible and caring attitudes and behaviours which recognise the rights of all people to be safe and free from abuse
- following the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct.

## ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

### Step 1 Responding to Concerns

1. If your concerns relate to a child in need of immediate protection; or you have formed a belief that a child is at significant risk of harm\*.

Go to Step 4

2. If you have significant concerns that a child and their family need a referral to Child FIRST for family services.

Go to Step 3

3. In all other situations

Go to Step 2

### Step 2 Forming a belief on reasonable grounds

1. Consider the level of immediate danger to the child.

Ask yourself:

a) Have I formed a belief that the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering significant harm?

**YES/NO**

and

b) Am I in doubt about the child's safety and the parent's ability to protect the child?

**YES / NO**

2. If you answered yes to a) or b)

Go to step 4

3. If you have significant concerns that a child and their family need a referral to Child FIRST for family services.

Go to step 3

### **Step 3 Making a referral to Child FIRST**

Child Wellbeing Referral

1. Contact your local Child FIRST provider.

- See over for contact list for local Child FIRST phone numbers.

Have notes ready with your observations and child and family details.

### **Step 4 Make a report to Child Protection**

Mandatory/Protective Report\*

1. Contact your local Child Protection Intake provider immediately.

- See over for contact list for local Child Protection phone numbers.
- For **After Hours Child Protection** Emergency Services, call **131 278**.

2. Have notes ready with your observations and child and family details.

*\*Non-mandated staff members who believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection are able to report their concerns to Child Protection*

### **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 our organisation'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. 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

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 organisation 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. This evidence is kept on file at the school. Please see the [Working with Children Check](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> for further information

## 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 promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. For our personnel, this means that we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal peoples
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of people from culturally and/or linguistically
- diverse backgrounds ensure that people with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

## 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

Our organisation 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.<sup>1</sup>

**Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a

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<sup>1</sup> 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](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence) <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>.

substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.<sup>2</sup> Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.<sup>3</sup>

## **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**

Our organisation 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 observed<sup>4</sup>

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

<sup>3</sup> 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](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first) <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first)>.

<sup>4</sup> For example behaviour, please see [An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards:](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc) [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/ data/assets/word doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards overview.doc](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc)