



Child Safe Standards

Background

- The 2013 Betrayal of Trust report by a Victorian Parliamentary committee has made recommendations to all Victorian Schools.
- For registered schools, Ministerial Order No. 870 sets out the specific actions they must take to meet these requirements.
- From the 1st of August 2016, the new Child Safe Standards come into effect.
- Werribee Primary School is committed to implementing the Child Safe Standards.

To create and maintain a child safe organisation, schools must have:

1. strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including effective leadership arrangements
2. a child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety
3. a code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
4. screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
5. processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
6. strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
7. strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

Child Safe Web Page- <http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafepages/default.html>

Ministerial Order No. 870

<http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafepages/documents/Min%20Order%20870%20Child%20Safe%20Standards.pdf>

Purpose

- To create a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe
- To provide a policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards
- To guide all our Staff, Volunteers and Contractors, on how to interact with children at Werribee Primary School

Commitment to child safety

- Werribee Primary School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people which is the primary focus of our care and decision-making
- Werribee Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse
- Werribee Primary School is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe
- Werribee Primary School is committed to providing an environment where children and young people's voices are heard regarding decisions that affect their lives
- Werribee Primary School promotes the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Werribee Primary School ensures all personnel involved with the 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

Implementation

- Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety
- Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives
- Foster a culture of openness that supports all personnel to safely disclose risks of harm to children
- Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount
- Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children
- Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and employ high quality staff
- Provide professional development opportunities to staff



- Ensure children know who to talk if they are worried or feel unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues
- Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities
- Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations if the safety and wellbeing of a child is at risk
- Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers
- Guide our Staff, Contractors and Volunteers on how to interact with children at Werribee Primary School and ensure all personnel abide by our Code of Conduct
- Werribee Primary Schools Code of Conduct sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour
- Ensure all staff understand their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect
- Train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse
- Support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, promote the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, promote the safety of children with a disability
- New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand Werribee Primary School's commitment to child safety (please refer to the Code of Conduct to understand appropriate behaviour)
- 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

Recruiting staff and volunteers

Werribee Primary School takes all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children by;

- Utilising selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities
- Ensuring all people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers hold a Working with Children Check and provide evidence of this check. Please see the Working with Children Check website for further information
- Carrying 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

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

Werribee Primary School has clear expectations for parents, children, staff members and volunteers when responding to any complaints by;

- Ensuring all personnel 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
- Ensuring Staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations
- Ensuring children, families, School and Staff, Emergency Teaching staff, Contractors and Volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour
- Ensuring all personnel have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if there is reasonable belief that an incident took place. Any personnel has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred must be reported

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



Werribee Primary School has clear processes for parents, children, staff members and volunteers when responding to any complaints by;

- Responding immediately and ensure student/s are safe
- Informing the Child Safety Offices (see Roles & Responsibilities)
- Following the “Child Safety Reporting Process”
- Recording all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored
- Providing updates to children and families on progress and any actions Werribee Primary School takes

Legislative responsibilities

Werribee 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
- **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
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties

Risk management

- Werribee Primary Schools protects 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, staff or volunteer are not to have contact with a child on social media that is unauthorised)

Other Werribee Primary School Policies which support a Child Safe environment include:

- Teachers Handbook for School Wide Positive Behaviour Support for Engagement
- Werribee Primary School Student Engagement Policy
- Werribee Primary School Safe and Collaborative Culture Handbook
- Child safety responding and reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting)
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- Visitors Policy
- Volunteers Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Critical Incident Plan
- Bullying Prevention

Definitions

Ministerial Order 870 provides the following definitions:

Child abuse -

- Any act committed against a child involving:
 - A sexual offence or
 - An offence under section 49B92 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

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 all 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 email 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 being: an individual working in a school environment who is:

- Directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority; a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)

Regular review

- This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur

Review Cycle

This policy was last updated on 21 May 2019 and is scheduled for review in May 2021.