

WOODLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

RATIONALE

Every government school has a responsibility to ensure a safe environment for its children. The Child Safe Environments Policy sets out our school's approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe and provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

AIMS

For all staff, volunteers, contractors and whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people to be aware of and adhere to this policy to create and maintain a child safe organisation.

To apply this policy across a broad range of school forums (e.g. camps, online) and outside of school hours and provide a framework for our approach to the school's Child Safety Standards.

IMPLEMENTATION

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Woodlands Primary School is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making, with particular attention paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability and vulnerable children

Woodlands Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse and is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.

Every person involved in Woodlands Primary School 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 children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

In its planning, decision-making and operations, Woodlands Primary School will

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety
2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount
5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development
7. Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk
10. Value the input of families and carers and correspond with them regularly.

Actions the school will take:

Woodlands Primary School will demonstrate its commitment to child safety and monitor the school's adherence to its child safety policy on an annual basis through sharing the policy with staff, casual relief teachers, volunteers, school council, and the school community. In order to:

- 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.

Monitoring the child safe policy will be managed by:

- embedding of child safety strategies into daily school procedures
- a commitment to child safety
- a code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children

- screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
- providing a clear process for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
- implementing strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
- developing strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children

SUPERVISION

- Supervision of employees and volunteers will be managed in a way that protects children from abuse and improves accountability and performance, without being onerous or heavy-handed. For instance, where practical, two staff members should be present during activities with children. In particular, children with a disability may require additional supervision.
- As a matter of good practice, new employees and volunteers should be supervised regularly to ensure they understand their role and learn skills, as well as to check that their behaviour towards children is appropriate. Any warning signs will be reported through appropriate channels, including the schools internal reporting procedures (such as school leadership), the Department of Human Services (child protection), or police if a child is believed to be at imminent risk.

PERFORMANCE AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

- A proactive performance development strategies will be used to improve employees and volunteers skills and knowledge on child safety. This is also an opportunity to improve knowledge and skills in working with children, as well as recognising and responding to suspected abuse.

Code of conduct and mandatory reporting

- Woodlands Primary School will provide all staff with a code of conduct which outlines expected standards of appropriate behaviour with and in the company of children. Annually the policy and code will be reviewed by each staff member as part of the schools meeting schedule and included in induction for all staff.
- Disciplinary procedures should be used if an allegation of child abuse is not made or a breach of the code of conduct is known or suspected.
- Employees and volunteers must be aware of reporting procedures and how to communicate concerns regarding the improper behaviour of any person within the organisation. Members of the school must be aware of their duty to raise concerns about the behaviour of any person who may present a risk of child abuse, without fear of repercussions. A mandatory Reporting policy is attached.
- Children and their families should be encouraged to raise any concerns about the behaviour of any person, and can expect to be listened to and supported.

Policies and procedures outlining Woodlands Primary School's approach to the Child Safe Standards are outlined below.

A child-safe culture

Personnel understand their roles and responsibilities/Code of Conduct

Woodlands Primary School's culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden. School leaders and managers will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's Code of Conduct. The school's Code of Conduct sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Both of these documents are referred to in the Staff manual and have hyperlinks to these documents. Refer to the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Victorian Teachers Professional Codes of Conduct and Ethics <http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/professional-responsibilities/conduct-and-ethics>. A copy is attached as an appendix to this document. Also all staff of Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees. <http://vpssc.vic.gov.au/resources/code-of-conduct-for-employees/>

Human resources practices and training

The school applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with them. We will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. All prospective staff and volunteers are required to undergo National Criminal History Records check and maintain a valid Working with Children Check.

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

The school has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. Immediate action should include reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection or another appropriate agency and notifying the principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns.

Risk reduction and management

The school believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.

Listening to children

The school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/care givers. We encourage child and parent/care giver involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/care givers to understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Considerable importance is placed on safeguarding the confidentiality and privacy of information about particular children and their families. The collection, use and storage of information is included in school policies.

Breaches

Breaches of Duty of Care and Mandatory Reporting Obligations are identified in the specific policies.

Policy evaluation and review

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework.

Definitions

A full list of definitions for Ministerial Order No. 870 is available at www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/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
- Serious neglect of a child

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 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)

Related policies and Documents

School Policy Advisory Guide – Duty of Care
School Policy Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations
DET Child Wellbeing and Safety Framework

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's annual mandate review cycle.

CERTIFICATION

This policy was adopted at the School Council Meeting held at Woodlands Primary School, October 2016

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