

## **Statement of Commitment to Child Safety**

Woodlands 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, 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.

The Woodlands Primary School - Child Safe policies can be found on our school website

<http://www.woodlandsp.vic.edu.au/>

## **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 Environment 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**

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#### **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
- 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 processes 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 Health and 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

Woodlands Primary School's culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

Personnel understand their roles and responsibilities/Code of Conduct

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

Considerable importance is placed on safeguarding the

<u>Privacy</u>	confidentiality and privacy of information about particular children and their families. The collection, use and storage of information is included in school policies.
<u>Breaches</u>	Breaches of Duty of Care and Mandatory Reporting Obligations are identified in the specific policies.
<u>Policy evaluation and review</u>	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.
<u>Definitions</u>	<p>A full list of definitions for Ministerial Order No. 870 is available at <a href="http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes">www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes</a></p> <p><i>Child abuse</i> includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any act committed against a child involving – a sexual offence or an offence under section 49B(2) of the <i>Crimes Act 1958</i> (grooming)</li> <li>• The infliction, on a child, of- Physical violence or Serious emotional or psychological harm</li> <li>• Serious neglect of a child</li> </ul> <p><i>Child safety</i> 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.</p> <p><i>School environment</i> 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a campus of the school</li> <li>• online school environments (including email and intranet systems)</li> <li>• 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)</li> </ul> <p><i>School staff means:</i></p> <p>In a government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• employed under Part 2.4 of the <i>Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (ETR Act)</i> in the government teaching service or</li> <li>• employed under a contract of service by the council of the school under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act or</li> <li>• a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)</li> </ul>
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, May 2019

WOODLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL  
10 Gum Nut Drive, Langwarrin 3910

Phone 97888 333 Fax 97888 300 Principal: Jim Wilson

## Code of Conduct: Child Abuse

**Child abuse is unacceptable. Ensuring children's safety is a top priority for the Victorian Government.**

### What is child abuse?

Child abuse includes any act committed against a child involving:

- a sexual offence
- a grooming offence; or
- the infliction on a child of physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm or serious neglect.

Our aim is to create a culture where protecting children from abuse is part of everyday thinking and practice. To strengthen existing approaches to preventing and responding to child abuse and provide for consistency in how these issues are managed. We all have a responsibility for keeping children safe.

All registered schools are required to develop strategies to embed a culture of child safety at the school. At Woodlands Primary school we will:

- embed a culture of child safety at the school
- allocate roles and responsibilities to ensure child safe practices are adhered to
- inform the school community about the strategies being employed at the school

### What is organisational culture and how does it relate to child safety?

Embedding an organisational culture of child safety is critical to reducing the risk of child abuse in schools.

To successfully embed a culture of child safety, a commitment to **zero tolerance of child abuse** must be led by the school council. This commitment must be shared, openly and transparently, by all members of the school community, including staff (including school employees, contractors and volunteers), parents and families, visitors and child.

**All staff, volunteers and council members of Woodlands Primary School are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children.**

**All personnel of Woodlands Primary School are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:**

- adhering to Woodlands Primary School's Child Safe Environment Policy at all times / upholding Woodlands Primary School's statement of commitment to child safety at all time
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating everyone with respect
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal child's self-identification)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination)
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities)
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to a member of Woodlands Primary School's Principal Class team and ensure any allegation to reported to the police or child protection
- reporting any child safety concerns to a member of Woodlands Primary School's Principal Class team, if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe
- encouraging children to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.

**Staff and volunteers must not:**

- develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps.
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)
- do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities)
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability
- communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to school work or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter.

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

By observing these standards you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to Woodlands Primary School Principal Class team.

**NB: These procedures are not intended to:**

- prohibit or discourage any 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** ; or
- prohibit staff from making records in relation to an allegation or disclosure of **child abuse** .

In the case of an allegation of **child abuse**, you will:

1. inform appropriate authorities about the allegation (including but not limited to mandatory reporting);
2. protect within reasonable means any child connected to the alleged **child abuse** until the allegation is resolved; and
3. make, secure, and retain records of the allegation of **child abuse** and the school's response to it.
4. **phone 000 if you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse.**

**EVALUATION**

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

**CERTIFICATION**

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## **MANDATORY REPORTING POLICY**

### **RATIONALE**

All children have a right to feel safe and to be safe. As teachers, we have a legal and moral responsibility to respond to serious incidences involving abuse and neglect of the children with whom we have contact, and to report instances that we believe involve physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect.

### **AIM**

To ensure that children's rights to be safe are maintained and each child is protected against physical and sexual abuse, and neglect.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

- All members of the Teaching Service are mandated by law to report signs or risks of harm, disclosures of abuse or neglect, or a reasonable belief a student is subjected to sexual abuse or physical harm.
- New staff will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of their induction procedure.
- Staff will be reminded of mandatory responsibilities annually.
- All concerns must be reported immediately to the Principal, or in his/her absence, the Assistant Principal.
- The Principal will keep a record of all discussions about a student with whom there is a concern.
- If a belief has been formed by a staff member that a mandatory report must be made, a record must be documented on Compass.
- The teacher and/or the Principal will contact the Department of Health & Human Services by telephone as soon as possible to make an official notification on: (03) 8765 5444 or after school hours crisis line 131 278.
- The police must be contacted when allegations of physical assault, sexual assault or sexual harassment occur.
- Members of Department of Human Services, or associated support or intervention services that visit the school following a notification, will interview staff and children only in the presence of a Principal or his/her nominee.
- All records and documentation are to remain on Compass.

- All reports, Compass notes and subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and remain strictly confidential.
- All incidents to be monitored, and any subsequent signs or indications of abuse are also to be reported.
- While only mandated by law to report incidents of physical and sexual abuse, and neglect; teachers are also encouraged to report incidents of emotional abuse or neglect.
- Students, who disclose to staff a desire to harm themselves or others, must be reported by staff to the principal immediately.

#### EVALUATION

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

Last Updated: June 2014

#### CERTIFICATION

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