



# Dandenong West Primary School

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## INFORMING THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY POLICY

### CSS1, 2, 3 & 5

#### RATIONALE

- School governing authorities are required to inform their school community about their arrangements to meet the following child safety standards set out in Ministerial Order No. 870.
  - *Standard One: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety (Clause 7)*
- The school community must be informed of the strategies to embed a culture of child safety at the school, the roles and responsibilities for achieving the strategies allocated by the school governing authority, and how the strategies are being put into practice.
  - *Standard Two: A child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety (Clause 8)*
- The school governing authority must inform the school community about the school's child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety.
- In addition to informing the school community of the above matters, the child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety (Standard 2), child safety code of conduct (Standard 3) and the school's procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of suspected child abuse (Standard 5) must be made publicly available.

#### PURPOSE

- To ensure Dandenong West Primary School complies with the legislative requirements of MO 870.
- To ensure the school demonstrates its commitment to creating a child safe environment.
- To ensure the school develops strategies communicate with members of the school community in relation to the Child Safe Standards 1, 2, 3 & 5 .
- To ensure the school discharges its duty of care towards children.

#### DEFINITION

The school community is a diverse group that generally includes (but may not be limited to) proprietors, members of the School Council, the Principal, registered teachers, student welfare staff, administration staff, facilities and security staff, parent/carers and families, volunteers, students and visitors to the school.

Ministerial Order No. 870 defines 'school staff' broadly to include employees, volunteers, contracted services providers and ministers of religion.

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-connected work means work authorised by the School Council 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 Council 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)

## IMPLEMENTATION

- Dandenong West Primary School consistently conveys the following messages about child safety:
  - Everyone connected to our school can help children be safe.
  - The safety and wellbeing of all children is our highest priority.
  - We have **zero tolerance of child abuse**.
  - We already have policies and processes in place to protect the care, safety and welfare of children. These are being strengthened to ensure a zero tolerance approach to child abuse.
  - There are clear boundaries about how adults in our school community may interact with the children at this school.
  - The new child safe standards go further than child protection arrangements did in the past.
  - The child safe standards apply to school staff (including volunteers and contractors), visitors and students' family members.
  - Keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility. Different people at our school have different roles and responsibilities for ensuring children's safety
  - Things you need to know about:
    - what 'zero tolerance' means to us,
    - what roles and responsibilities adults have for child safety,
    - our procedures to respond to and report complaints of any form of child abuse
  - We want to ensure you know how we are keeping your children safe at school, and how we'd like you to support us i.e. our families.
  - Staff members (including volunteers) will receive training and support to understand and carry out their responsibilities under the standards.
  - Unsupervised contractors will be asked about their child safety arrangements as a condition of working with us if they work with children enrolled in the school (or children can reasonably be expected to be present while they are at the school).
  - Other people using our school facilities will be asked about their child safety arrangements as a condition of using our facilities if they involve children enrolled at the school (or children can reasonably be expected to be present while their staff or other adults are at the school).
- The school's approach to communicating relevant aspects of the child safe standards reflects the differing roles, responsibilities and levels of involvement of various members of the school community.

### For All Staff:

- Communication strategies to inform staff (including volunteers and contractors) about the school's arrangements relating to child safety include:
  - involving a broad cross-section of staff in strategy development and reviews of policies and procedures associated with the child safe standards.
  - incorporating a standing agenda item for child safety at staff/team meetings e.g. to consult on and reinforce the child safety code of conduct
  - a full staff meeting to launch the revised child safety arrangements, recognise staff consultation, outline roles and responsibilities, and confirm the whole school's commitment to protecting children
  - group orientation sessions for participants to learn more about their personal responsibilities and discuss relevant scenarios within teams, teaching & non-teaching
  - posting child safety information on notice boards within the school

- encouraging reflective practices among staff including about communicating child safety arrangements among the school community

### **For Volunteers, Contractors & External Providers**

Volunteers, contractors and external providers may be engaged in work at a school regularly or occasionally. Their involvement may be for long or short periods of time.

The range of additional communication approaches to ensure that each volunteer, contractor or external provider working for the school, whether inside and outside school hours, understands their responsibilities for child safety and the school's arrangements under Standard 1 and Standard 2.

These approaches include:

- providing well-labelled advice on the website about what to expect if working with or volunteering at the school e.g. that volunteers are required to adhere to the child safety code of conduct
- including child safety information in volunteer and contractor advice kits available on the school website and/or in written agreements
- a paragraph relating to volunteer and contractor responsibilities placed at the top of sign-in sheets or displayed prominently by the visitor book kept by the main office
- a summary of child safety responsibilities added to printed visitor tags or, if tags are not used, a business card-sized handout of this information given to contractors and volunteers
- clear and friendly notices about contractor and volunteer responsibilities in areas they are likely to spend time in, such as the staffroom, assembly hall, sports facilities and office waiting room
- developing relevant examples of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour e.g. from the VRQA Child Safety Code of Conduct – Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviour information sheet on the school website
- including relevant child safety information in tendering and contracting information packages and volunteer induction kits
- ensuring that facilities staff and other school employees in regular contact with contractors and facility hirers have been trained to brief others about their child safety responsibilities.

### **For Families**

The school has measures in place to communicate with families of children enrolled at the school. These measures include the school website, and a regular newsletter.

Official social media accounts, family assemblies, school parent organisations, customised mobile apps and the local media may also be used to share information.

Making communications as relevant as possible to families' own children and using all the communication methods at hand on more than one occasion maximises the chance of families receiving this important information.

Providing information in simple, plain English or in languages other than English, free of jargon, helps all families to best understand our messages.

The strategies to inform families of the school's arrangements under Standard 1 and Standard 2 include:

- seeking family representatives to assist in the strategy development and reviews of policies associated with the child safe standards. Later, the wider school community will be consulted about these activities via a survey before the strategies and policies are finalised
- using family databases to personally address emailed or printed letters from the Principal to each family and including the child's name in the introduction (e.g. 'Dear Mrs Nguyen, I am writing to tell you about some important changes that help to protect all our students, including your daughter Chloe')
- asking families to acknowledge they have read information sent to them with either a simple reply email or a tear-and-return slip on a printed letter (replies could be optional but may lead to higher value being placed on the information and the opportunity for families to pose questions)
- co-hosting a series of day and evening meetings with the school parent organisation to give all families the opportunity to hear about the standards and ask questions at a time that suits them
- adapting the examples provided in the VRQA Child Safety Code of Conduct – Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviour information sheet to show the standards in day-to-day application within the school community

- developing a short 'then and now' summary of the differences between the school's former child protection arrangements and the new guiding materials set by the standards – this creates interest in what has changed
- creating short videos in which staff and family representatives volunteer to describe their responsibilities under the standards – students could be invited to film and conduct the interviews to increase family interest
- consulting with appropriate community members on whether the child safety strategies, policies and information is inclusive of families of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disabilities, children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds and vulnerable children
- providing translations of key messages from the standards for families into one or more languages other than English, depending on the school's community.
- inviting parent representatives to join the school to approach local media about positive communication outcomes as a result of responding to the child safety standards.

#### **For Visitors**

Visitors to the school form part of the school community. Visits will include both scheduled and unannounced visits from people known and unknown to the school governing authority.

Some possible communication approaches may include:

- providing well-labelled advice on the website about what to expect if visiting the school
- adding a paragraph relating to the standards and visitors' responsibilities at the top of the sign-in sheet or on prominent display next to the visitor book kept by the main office
- adding a brief summary of responsibilities to printed visitor tags or, if tags are not used, having a business card-sized handout of this information for visitors and volunteers
- displaying clear and friendly notices about visitor and volunteer responsibilities in areas they are likely to frequent, such as the canteen, assembly hall, sports facilities and office waiting room.

## REFERERNCES

Creating a Child Safe Organisation Guide

Child Safe Standards Toolkit - [www.education.vic.gov.au/school/Principals/spag/safety/Pages/childsafestandards.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/Principals/spag/safety/Pages/childsafestandards.aspx)

Protect – Identifying All Forms of Child Abuse in Victorian Schools 2016 [www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/child safe](http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/child safe)

## REVIEW CYCLE AND EVALUATION

This policy was last updated on 18 Feb 2019 and is scheduled for review in 2 years year.

Ratified by school council on 20/2/2019