



Dandenong West Primary School

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SCHOOL CHILD SAFETY OFFICER POLICY – CSS6

RATIONALE

Ministerial Order (MO) 870 which comes into effect 1 August 2016, provides the framework for how schools will be required to comply with the Standards. Overall responsibility for ensuring compliance rests with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA).

Preventing child abuse and responding to allegations is everyone's business. The Child Safe Standards aim to drive cultural change in organisations so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in everyday thinking and practice. To engage this cultural change, schools need to:

- help leaders create an organisational culture that protects children from abuse
- ensure the school's policies and practices reflect a commitment to child safety
- ensure school leadership is aware of allegations and substantiated cases of abuse and responds in ways that protect children from abuse
- ensure staff and volunteers know and understand the organisation's commitment to child safety
- commit to continuous improvement through regular reviews and updating policies and practices, and being open to scrutiny.

A school leader for child safety should have sufficient status and authority, including leadership support and the ability to direct other staff (where appropriate), to undertake the role effectively.

PURPOSE

- To ensure Dandenong West Primary School complies with the legislative requirements of MO 870.
- To identify a school leader who will help to embed an organisational culture of child safety.
- To ensure the role of the School Safety Officer is clearly defined and articulated.
- To ensure the school demonstrates its commitment to creating a child safe environment.
- To raise awareness within the school community of the importance of child safety.
- To ensure the promotion of:
 - the cultural safety of Aboriginal children if applicable
 - the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
 - the safety of children with a disability

DEFINITION

Child Safety Officer – a person who would be a point for contact for staff and parents reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns and for children who feel unsafe or who wish to disclose abuse.

IMPLEMENTATION

Principles

- The safety and wellbeing of children is the highest priority for this school.
- The school has **zero tolerance of child abuse** in any form.
- All allegations of child abuse and child safety concerns are treated very seriously by this school. This includes complying with all legal requirements, including reporting suspicions of child abuse to police or the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection as soon as practicable.

If any staff member believes a child is at immediate risk of abuse, she/he must immediately phone 000 and ask for police. In an emergency, this action is to occur without consultation and inform school leadership as soon as practicable.

(Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence, except in limited circumstances such as where the information has already been reported to DHHS Child Protection.)

Broad Areas of the School Child Safety Officer's Role are to:

- Provide Authoritative Advice
- Act as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of child safety.
- Liaise with the Principal and school leaders to maintain the visibility of child safety.
- Lead the development of the school's child safety culture, including being a child safety champion and providing coordination in communicating, implementing, monitoring, enhancing and reporting on strategies to embed a culture of child safety.

Raise Awareness

- Ensure the school's policies are known and used appropriately.
- Ensure the school's child safety policy is reviewed at least every two years in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework.
- Ensure the child protection policy is available publicly and parents/carers are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school in this.
- Be alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers.
- Encourage among all staff a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings in any measures to protect them.

Train

- Being authoritative in providing advice by:
 - keeping their skills up to date with appropriate training carried out every two years
 - having a working knowledge of how the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Community Service Organisations conduct a child protection case conference to be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so.
- Be able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals.
- Ensure each member of staff has access to and understands the school's child safety policy and procedures, especially new and part time staff.
- Make sure staff are aware of training opportunities and the latest DHHS and DET policies and guidance.

The School Child Safety Officer regularly will provide information, training and education for School Council, staff and volunteers, visitors and contractors about child safety including:

- what child abuse is
- how to identify and reduce child abuse risks
- understanding and appreciating Aboriginal culture and other cultures and languages they may engage with in their role
- the importance of ensuring culturally safe environments for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and how to promote this
- the importance of ensuring safe environments for children with a disability, and how to promote this
- what constitutes inappropriate behaviour between children, such as inappropriate sexualised play, bullying and fighting
- what is inappropriate behaviour between children and adults, with reference to the Child Safe Code of Conduct.

Other

The School Child Safety Officer is expected to:

- Participate in risk analysis and reduction activities
- Promote the participation and empowerment of children by consulting with and talking to children in focus groups, class discussions, including children in policy development as well as through the annual Attitude to School Survey.

REFERNCES

- Duty of Care Policy
- Police and DHHS Interviews Policy
- Responding to Student Sexual Offending Policy
- Information Privacy Policy

- Communication Procedures and Schedule
- Child Safe Standards

REVIEW CYCLE AND EVALUATION

This policy was last updated on 18 Feb 2019 and is scheduled for review in 2 years year or If the guidelines change.

Ratified by school council on 20/2/2019