



# Dandenong West Primary School

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## GOOD LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE IN A CHILD SAFE SCHOOL POLICY – CSS1

### RATIONALE

- Working with children can be very rewarding, but it brings additional responsibilities.
- All staff and volunteers in organisations providing services to children need to recognise the importance and legislative implications, of keeping children safe. Under this Standard, organisations need to establish new ways or build on existing systems to embed or improve on a culture of child safety throughout all levels of their organisation.
- 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 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.
- Schools must act to protect children from abuse and build an environment where children feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. This requires a culture of child safety to be embedded throughout the organisation so that child safety is part of everyone's everyday thinking and practice. Such a culture is achieved through proactive leadership in demonstrating the appropriate values, attitudes and behaviours of an organisation.
- A child safe environment is the product of a range of strategies and initiatives. The school should foster a culture of openness, inclusiveness and awareness. Children and adults should know what to do if they observe or are subject to abuse or inappropriate behaviour.
- 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).

### PURPOSE

- To ensure Dandenong West Primary School complies with the legislative requirements of Ministerial Order 870.
- To identify those aspects of school leadership that will help to embed an organisational culture of child safety.
- 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

### DEFINITIONS

At Dandenong West Primary School, school leadership comprises 5 members:

- Principal
- Assistant Principal

- Leading Teacher – Wellbeing Officer
- Leading Teacher – Numeracy Coach
- Leading Teacher – Literacy Coach

Child Safe Officer – a person who is a point for contact for children who feel unsafe or who wish to disclose abuse.

The School Council is the governing body and is responsible for ratifying all policies developed by the school.

In all Standards, the term “child” applies to any person under the age of 18 years. (For the glossary of all terms, please refer to Appendix 1).

## IMPLEMENTATION

- The safety and wellbeing of our school population is our highest priority and our first consideration.
- We have **zero tolerance of child abuse**, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- To reinforce the message to be conveyed within the Standards, the school has consciously chosen to use the term ‘child’ or ‘children’ rather than ‘student/students’. The exception is where the term ‘student’ is integral to the name of a document.
- The school will act to protect children from abuse, and build an environment where children feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. We do this by providing a culture of child safety embedded throughout our school so that child safety is part of everyone’s everyday thinking and practice. This culture has been achieved through proactive leadership in demonstrating the appropriate values, attitudes and behaviours of Dandenong West Primary School.
- Our child safe environment is the product of a range of strategies and initiatives. At Dandenong West Primary School, we foster a culture of openness, inclusiveness and awareness. Children and adults know what to do if they observe or are subject to abuse or inappropriate behaviour.
- All staff and volunteers must consider the safety of all children, and recognise the importance of cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, cultural safety for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, the safety of children with a disability and children who are vulnerable.
- The school recognises that developing a child safe environment is an ongoing process and will not be achieved in the short term.
- Implementing the Child Safe Standards requires an ongoing commitment. It will not be achieved in one activity or exercise. However, this does not have to be a complex process and will involve:
  - regular staff briefings and discussions
  - taking every opportunity to provide information to the parent community e.g. through Newsletter articles, meetings with Parent Organisations as applicable
  - regular updates to School Council (a regular agenda item)

### **Governance In A Child Safe Environment**

Leadership at Dandenong West Primary School takes preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety issues. The safety and wellbeing of children in our school is of paramount consideration when developing activities, policies and management practices.

### **Leadership Responsibilities**

Leadership at Dandenong West Primary School is responsible for embedding a culture of child safety, including the use of the tools provided by DET. The Leadership Team takes the lead in protecting children from abuse, are aware of child abuse allegations and risks and takes responsibility for ensuring an appropriate response.

The school will ensure that all allegations of child abuse and child safety concerns are treated very seriously. This includes complying with all legal requirements, including reporting suspicions of child abuse to police and/or child protection.

**If any staff member believes a child is at immediate risk of abuse, they must immediately phone 000 and ask for police. In an emergency, this action is to occur without consultation but advise the Principal 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.)

### **Identify and Analyse Risk of Abuse**

Dandenong West Primary School adopts an approach to prevent, detect and respond to child abuse risks. This includes a risk management strategy and policy that sets out how our school identifies, assesses, and takes steps to reduce or remove child abuse risks. Please refer to Standard 6.

Risk analysis always forms part of our preparation for school camps and some excursions. The analysis will now include possible potential for child abuse. The school's *Safety of Children Working with External Providers (Incursions) Policy* already has strategies to minimise the risk of abuse.

### **Developed of a Child Safe Policy**

The school has developed a child safe policy which outlines our commitment to promoting children's wellbeing and protecting children from abuse. Please refer to the school's policy documents and to Standard 2.

### **Developed of a Code of Conduct**

The school has developed a Code of Conduct specific to child safety which specifies the standards of conduct and care required when working and interacting with children. Teachers are regulated by the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) under the Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct.

The Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) developed the Code of Conduct as required by Part 2.6 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006. The Code of Conduct is a set of principles or standards for the behaviour and conduct of all Victorian teachers in the Victorian Government Teaching Service and the non-Government sector.

The following principles are of particular relevance when using social media tools:

**Principle 1.5:** Teachers are always in a professional relationship with the students in their school whether at school or not. Teachers hold a unique position of influence and trust that should not be violated or compromised. They exercise their responsibilities in ways that recognise that there are limits or boundaries to their relationships with students.

**Principle 1.7:** Teachers work in collaborative relationships with students' families and communities.

**Principle 2.1:** The personal conduct of a teacher will have an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and on the profession as whole.

While teachers can be friendly with students, parents/carers and communities, their relationship must always remain professional and should never be on a personal footing. It is important for teachers to consider the consequences of their actions. The world of social media can seriously damage reputations and propel bullying to new levels. Even with security settings in place, issues may still arise.

The school's Child Safe Code of Conduct encourages appropriate behaviour between children called the Student Code of Conduct.

We also have developed a code of conduct for staff, teaching and non-teaching, which specifies the standards of conduct and care required when working and interacting with children. The *Staff Code of Conduct Policy (General)* references the *Child Safe Policy* and explicitly prohibits any staff member from communicating with children on social media. It also informs staff of the need for a current Working with Children Check which is recorded on CASES21.

The school's *Student Engagement Policy*, the *Bullying & Harassment Policy*, the *Internet/Social Media Policy* and the *Mobile Phone, Use by Children Policy* also describe appropriate interaction between children. Please refer to Standard 3.

### **Chosen Suitable Employees and Volunteers**

The school takes all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. This includes police record and identity checks, Working with Children Checks where required, face-to-face interviews and detailed reference checks from previous employers, including from the applicant's most recent line manager. The school's *Safety of Students Working with External Providers (Incursions) Policy* and the *Working with Children Checks – Staff & Volunteers Policies* have details of the steps the school will take to promote a child safe environment. Please refer to the Standard 4.

### **Visitors to the School**

The school has made clear decisions about what category of visitor is welcome in the school and the steps the school will take to ensure safety of children. Please refer to the school's *Visitors to the School Policy* and the *Photographing & Filming Children Policy*. Please refer to the Standard 4.

### **Supported, Trained, Supervised and Enhanced of Performance**

The school ensures that visitors, volunteers, contractors and employees who work with children have ongoing supervision, support and training so that their performance is developed and enhanced to help protect children from abuse. In particular, leadership need to understand their responsibilities. In particular, The Principal, Leadership Team and the Child Safety Officer understand their responsibilities. Our Child Safety Officer is the person who has knowledge of child safety issues, and is a point of contact for others who have questions or concerns or want to report an allegation of abuse.

New staff and trainee teachers if applicable, are trained as part of the induction process.

Please refer to Standard 4.

### **Promoted Inclusion**

The school values diversity and is inclusive of all children and families. In particular, the school will establish a culture that supports:

- cultural safety for Aboriginal children, for example by working in partnership with Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal community controlled organisations if applicable
- cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, for example by using inclusive language and images in policy documents, and communications such as the website and newsletters
- the safety of children with a disability, for example by ensuring your organisation is accessible to everyone and ensuring appropriate training and supervision of staff and volunteers working with children with a disability.

The school understands that for Aboriginal people, culture is about family networks, Elders and ancestors. It is about relationships, languages, dance, ceremony and heritage. Culture is about spiritual connection to lands and waters. It is the way stories are passed on and knowledge given to babies and children. It is how people are greeted. It is looking for connection. It is about all the parts that bind us together.

The school recognises that creating a physical environment that is respectful of Aboriginal culture is an important first step. Symbols and images that surround a place send an important message about respect. By acknowledging the Country in which the school is located, we are demonstrating our willingness to learn, understand and respond to the diversity of Aboriginal cultures. As part of the policy review process, the school will consider whether or not 'Acknowledgement of Country' should form part of its ceremonies.

The school recognises that cultural safety is living in an environment that is safe for people, where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are what they need.

It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening.

The school recognises that promotion of cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds involves:

- ensuring the school clearly demonstrates a zero tolerance of discrimination
- being respectful, inclusive and welcoming of families from a range of backgrounds
- recognising times of importance to different cultures
- ensuring the physical environment has a positive image of a range of cultures, in terms of decoration and artwork
- employing staff that are representative of the local community
- actively seeking out and talking to families about how they would like to be involved
- asking about the best way to provide information to children and families

The school recognises that promotion of the safety of children with a disability involves:

- acknowledging that children with a disability are particularly vulnerable and ensure risk assessment processes considers their needs
- ensuring the school clearly demonstrates a zero tolerance to discrimination and actively welcomes all children
- making sure the environment does not pose access difficulties
- being responsive to families regarding specific measures that may be required to ensure the safe participation of a child with a disability
- supporting staff, other children and their families to understand and be inclusive of people with a disability
- thinking about how the school can encourage participation and feedback from children with a disability and their families

The school's definition of 'disability' extends to children with a medical condition such as diabetes, epilepsy, anaphylaxis or blood-borne viruses and has developed policies to support these children.

Please refer also to the school's *Inclusion & Professional Support Policy*.

The school recognises that respecting diversity means:

- valuing and respecting people's beliefs
- building responsive relationships
- communicating openly and honestly to find out how best to be inclusive and respect cultural needs
- examining our personal ideas, customs and beliefs and
- respecting that the beliefs of one person may not be the same as another
- acknowledging and respecting that others can hold different beliefs of equal significance

The school's *Anti-Discrimination Policy* describes the school's commitment to providing teaching and learning environments that are free from discrimination in all forms, including those based on race, ethnicity, gender, ability, disability, sexuality and religion. Anti-discrimination extends to the school's dress code so that children are treated equally with the rights of individual children balanced against the best interests of the school community as a whole when developing and implementing their dress codes.

### **Empowered and Promoted the Participation of Children in Decision-Making**

The school promotes the involvement and participation of children in developing and maintaining a child safe environment.

The school promotes the involvement and participation of children in developing and maintaining child safe environments. Dandenong West Primary School provides opportunities for children to express their views on the student Code of Conduct, and then incorporates this feedback to improve our policies and practices. Ideas from children are sought through Junior School Council meetings, suggestion boxes and feedback sessions. Ideas are sought formally by completion of the annual Student Attitude to School Survey which specifically addresses feelings of safety at school.

We endeavour to listen to children and take their ideas or concerns seriously, particularly if they are disclosing abuse or concerns for their safety or the safety of other children.

### **Professional Learning**

The school has a strong commitment to ongoing professional learning for all staff.

There is an annual briefing for mandatory reporting protocols which is a component of induction for new staff.

This will be extended to include volunteers and external providers.

Staff are given information about a number of school policies with an emphasis now placed on the child safe related policies.

Please refer to the school's *Professional Development & Learning Policy*.

- The school will know it has successfully implemented Standard 1 when:
  - there are clear and transparent arrangements for leadership to be made aware of child safety issues

- policies and practices prioritise child safety and promote shared responsibility – not just at a leadership level – by outlining all staff and volunteer responsibilities
- policies and procedures include the steps staff, volunteers, children or their families should take if they have concerns about the organisation’s leadership in regard to child safety
- child safety is a core part of public and internal messaging
- a culture exists where staff, volunteers, children and families feel comfortable and supported when talking about any child safety concerns.
- a culture exists of supporting cultural safety for Aboriginal children, and the organisations working in partnership with Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal community controlled organisations to improve safety for Aboriginal children
- a culture exists of supporting cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- a culture exists of supporting safety for children with a disability

## REFERERNCES

Creating a Child Safe Organisation Guide

Child Safe Standards Toolkit - [www.education.vic.gov.au/school/Principals/spag/safety/Pages/chilsafestandards.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/Principals/spag/safety/Pages/chilsafestandards.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 20/2/19

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Definition
<b>The Act</b>	Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005
<b>Aboriginal child</b>	A person under the age of 18 who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent</li> <li>· identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and</li> <li>· is accepted as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community.</li> </ul>
<b>Child abuse</b>	For the purposes of these Standards, abuse constitutes any act committed against a child involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· physical violence</li> <li>· sexual offences</li> <li>· serious emotional or psychological abuse</li> <li>· serious neglect.</li> <li>· family violence</li> </ul>
<b>Children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds</b>	A child or young person who identifies as having particular cultural or linguistic affiliations by virtue of their place of birth, ancestry or ethnic origin, religion, preferred language or language spoken at home or because of their parents' identification on a similar basis.
<b>Child</b>	A person who is under the age of 18 years.
<b>Child safety</b>	In the context of the Child Safe Standards, child safety means measures to protect children from abuse.
<b>Child safe organisation</b>	In the context of the Child Safe Standards, a child safe organisation is one that meets the Child Safe Standards by proactively taking measures to protect children from abuse.
<b>Cultural competency</b>	A set of congruent behaviours, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals that enable them to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.
<b>Cultural abuse</b>	Actions and attitudes that deliberately ignore, denigrate or attack the culture of a person or community.
<b>Cultural safety for Aboriginal children</b>	The positive recognition and celebration of cultures. It is more than just the absence of racism or discrimination, and more than cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity. A culturally safe environment does not ignore, challenge or deny cultural identity. Cultural safety upholds the rights of Aboriginal children to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· identify as Aboriginal without fear of retribution or questioning</li> <li>· have an education that strengthens their culture and identity</li> <li>· maintain connections to their land and country</li> <li>· maintain their strong kinship ties and social obligations</li> <li>· be taught their cultural heritage by their Elders</li> <li>· receive information in a culturally sensitive, relevant and accessible manner</li> <li>· be involved in services that are culturally respectful</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds</b>	An environment which is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for children; where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their cultural or linguistic identity, of who they are and what they need. Efforts need to be made to ensure the culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and their families receive information in a culturally sensitive, relevant and accessible manner, including in relevant community languages.
<b>Children with a disability</b>	A disability can be any physical, sensory, neurological disability, acquired brain injury or intellectual disability or developmental delay that affects a child's ability to undertake everyday activities. A disability can occur at any time in life. Children can be born with a disability or acquire a disability suddenly through an injury or illness. Some disabilities may be obvious while others are hidden.
<b>Organisation</b>	The Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005 (the Act) will provide that the standards apply to 'applicable entities', which are defined in the Act as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an incorporated body or association</li> <li>• an unincorporated body or association (however structured)</li> <li>• an individual who carries on a business and engages contractors, employees or volunteers to assist in the business in providing services or facilities</li> </ul>