

CHILD SAFE STANDARD 1 - STRATEGIES TO EMBED A CULTURE OF CHILD SAFETY POLICY

LEGISLATION

On 26 November 2015, the Victorian Parliament passed the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015, which amended the Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005 to introduce the Child Safe Standards that would apply to all organisations involved in child related work in Victoria.

Ministerial Order 870 - Child Safe Standards - Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools provides guidance on how the Standards apply to a school setting. It came into effect on 1 August 2016.

PURPOSE

The School Council and staff are responsible for ensuring a culture of child safety is embedded at the school. The following will be embedded to inform the culture of a Child Safe school where the school council, staff, students and parents/carers all work cohesively to create such a culture.

- The diverse needs of children in the school are to be recognised. It is important that our school is inclusive and a culturally safe place for children and parents. Young children, children with a disability, non English speaking children, indigenous children and children from culturally diverse backgrounds may require greater levels of support and consideration. (See Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy). Montpellier Primary School promotes a culture of safety actively through our school wellbeing program and as a standing item on Leadership Team and PLC Meeting agendas.
- Key Leadership staff in the school are allocated to undertake child safety roles and responsibilities (See: Montpellier Primary School Roles and Responsibilities).
- Our students and adults know what to do if they observe or are subject to abuse or inappropriate behaviour.

Leadership in a Child Safe Environment

Working with children can be very rewarding, and it brings additional responsibilities as we ensure that we meet the care and safety needs of all students.

- At Montpellier Primary School, we foster a culture of openness, inclusiveness and awareness.
- Our school wellbeing program and Code of Conduct outlines the values of the school. They are readily available to families.
- The School will 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 is achieved through proactive leadership by all staff in demonstrating the appropriate values, attitudes and behaviours of Montpellier Primary School.
- Our wellbeing processes promotes such behaviour in students and enables recognition for positive behaviour.
- Teachers explicitly teach safety and cultural understanding supporting students to understand the needs of all students. This is taught explicitly through role playing, dialogue and visiting presenters such as The Life Education Van.

- All staff and volunteers consider the safety of all children, and recognise the importance of cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.
- The leadership team takes the lead in protecting children from abuse, and are aware of any child abuse allegations and risks, and take 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 (See Child Safety Responding and Reporting Procedures Policy (including Mandatory Reporting Policy)).
- The school makes this information to families in the Office area and on the school website.

School Child Safety Roles and Responsibilities

The Leadership team have the responsibility of working with School Council and staff to build and maintain a culture of transparency, inclusiveness and awareness. The Leadership team will ensure our child safe practices are compliant with Ministerial Order 870.

School Council has Child Safety as standing item for discussion.

Key responsibilities of the Leadership team in ensuring a Child Safe environment include:

- Acting as a source of support, advice and expertise to School Council, staff, students and parents/carers.
- Liaising with school staff to ensure a collaborative, transparent and unified approach to child safety.
- Leading the development of the school's child safe culture including being child safe communicators and providing coordination in communicating, implementing, monitoring, enhancing and reporting on strategies to embed a culture of child safety. This includes communicating with a mix of tools such as online (website), information sessions, staff communication, and transition sessions for new parents, and through School Council communication.
- Monitoring and auditing school practice.
- Ensuring the relevant risk assessment to identified school needs is in place.

Governance in a Child Safe Environment

It is the overall responsibility of the Montpellier Primary School Council to take a 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, events, policies and management practices in line with Child Safe Standards. The School Council reviews an area of the Child Safe Standards at each meeting.

Child Safe Strategies and Initiatives

Leadership will raise awareness across the school, including staff, students and teachers and others who come into contact with children in the school by:

- Ensuring the school's policies are known and used appropriately;
- Ensuring the school actions are reviewed as to the effectiveness of the strategies put into place and to revise accordingly;
- Ensuring the school's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework. This being incorporated into the Annual Implementation Plan, Strategic Plan and the 4 yearly Review process.
- Conducting regular briefing sessions for school staff members to ensure a high degree of awareness of The Standards and the school's Child Safe Policy.
- Ensuring the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Procedures Policy is available publicly and parents are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be

made and the role of the school in this. The policy will be uploaded onto the school's website and will be evaluated as part of the policy cycle for all school policies unless changes in the Order dictates changes in the school's policy. The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy will be provided to all new families who come into the school at the time of enrolment.

- Being alert to the specific needs of children in need, including those with special educational needs. The Executive Leadership team will actively communicate with the broader leadership team regarding potentially vulnerable and at risk children. 'Child Safe' will be a standing item on the Leadership Team, PLC teams, School Council and other meeting agendas to ensure regular forums do support embedding a child safe culture in the school.
- Encouraging among all staff a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings in any measures to protect them.
- Working with teachers to include, where appropriate, supporting teaching points into curriculum programs ie cyber safety programs, health and well-being related programs to build a culture of pro-activity and healthy relationships.
- School policies outline staff responsibilities to keep students safe.
- Employment of a Chaplain/ Wellbeing Officer.
- All adults sign in and wear lanyards to identify them whilst they are in the school.
- The school newsletter is only available through COMPASS – a secure site for parents/carers, and a Private Facebook Group – and not for general distribution.
- SEE SAW digital portfolio is password protected for parents/carers and students.
- Staff and Students regularly practice lock down and evacuation procedures.
- CCTV cameras have been installed around the school.
- All staff receive the Staff Handbook and engage in an induction process each year.

Communication

Leadership will ensure Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy information and procedures are available for everyone in the school community. Ways of disseminating information will include: Website, Compass, newsletters, information sessions, staff meetings and staff bulletins. All staff are provided with the Child Safe Handbook and the Protect guidelines.

Identifying and analysing risk of abuse

Montpellier 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.

Montpellier Primary School has:

Developed a Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and a Child Safety Responding and Reporting Procedures Policy (including Mandatory Reporting).

- This child safe policy outlines our commitment to promoting children's wellbeing and protecting children from abuse.

Developed a Code of Conduct

- The Code of Conduct specifies the standards of conduct and care required when working and interacting with children. It aligns with our school wellbeing program.
- 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 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.

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. Alongside the Department of Education and Training (DET) recruitment processes, it will ensure it includes:

- Selection criteria in job descriptions.
- Police record and identity checks.
- Working with Children Checks where required
- Face-to-face interviews
- Detailed reference checks from previous employers, including from the applicant's most recent line manager, a written reference check.

Supported, trained, supervised and enhanced performance

- The school ensures that volunteers 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, the Principal and leadership team understand their responsibilities
- Particular focus is placed on supporting children with additional needs and children with complex behaviours.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Further information on child safe standards can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services website: Additional resources for organisations in the child safe standards toolkit can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services website: . Registered schools can contact the Department of Education and Training: child.safe.schools@edumail.vic.gov.au

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated and ratified on 16/09/2019 following review and development by School Council. It is scheduled for review in September 2021