

# MONTPELLIER PRIMARY SCHOOL

## CHILD SAFE STANDARD 7 – STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE CHILD PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

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### 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

Montpellier Primary School has a whole school approach to the empowerment and participation of students. We empower our students by encouraging and valuing student voice and agency and value participation. Opportunities are provided for students to have a say about issues and concerns that affect them in a safe and inclusive environment. Our students know they can be heard and their thoughts valued.

This is shaped through the school's wellbeing and Habits of Mind programs.

After the family, school has the most significant influence on child development, so making students' time at school enjoyable and worthwhile supports their mental health and wellbeing. Part of this process involves supporting students to be active contributors to their own learning. The sense of belonging, positive relationships and improved self-esteem achieved when children are active contributors in their school community are significant protective factors that support their mental health and wellbeing now and in the future.

While listening to student voice is important, research shows that the benefits for students don't come from just hearing their own voices; it's more about how other people (students, teachers, schools) respond to students' voices and work with them to make ideas come to life. In other words, the opportunities for students to participate in shaping their experiences at school must be real rather than simulated

### IMPLEMENTATION

Being a Child Safe school means developing strategies to communicate and engage with all children who are involved with our school. It is important to ask our children when they feel safe, and when they feel unsafe.

As trusted adults we ensure that our children's voices are heard, respected and valued. We encourage, listen and support our children when they speak up about issues of safety and wellbeing. By enabling the participation of our children in our school we are:

- Demonstrating our commitment to upholding the rights of children
- Strengthening the commitment of children in our school
- Building the communication and leadership skills of children through our learning showcase, authentic learning experiences, leadership opportunities and student agency in learning
- Building cultural understanding and respect
- Enhancing the safety of children

We teach our children about their rights and the school values, to support them to recognise what abuse is and understand it is not okay and that they can do something about it (age appropriate).

- We talk to our children about safety; both physical (the environment around them) and psychological (feeling valued, respected and cared for).
- We use mindfulness and one to one restorative conversations.
- Montpellier Primary School ensures children feel safe and comfortable in reporting concerns or allegations of abuse.
- We have implanted simple and accessible processes that help children understand what to do if they want to report abuse, inappropriate behaviour or concerns for their safety.
- All staff at Montpellier Primary School will have an awareness of children's rights and adults' responsibilities regarding child abuse.
- The children are guided by posters around the school as to where they can seek help.

At Montpellier Primary School our whole school approach in promoting the participation and empowerment of children comes through our delivery of a rigorous Curriculum (aligned with the Victorian Curriculum), policies and procedures. We work on the premise of primary prevention in giving our children strategies through the following whole school programs/approaches/policies:

- Drug Education
- Preparation for Puberty
- Buddies program
- Transition processes
- Recess and Lunchtime activities
- Passive Play areas
- Brave Hearts program
- Life Education Program
- Project Rockit
- The Resilience Project
- Student Attendance Policy
- Inclusion monitoring
- Internet Use and Social Media Policy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy

As a school, we implement strategies such as the following to promote the participation and empowerment of children:

- Providing children with child-appropriate and accessible information about what child abuse is, their rights to make decisions about their body and their privacy, that no one has a right to injure them, and how they can raise concerns about abuse
- Ensure information and processes for reporting concerns are accessible to all children, for example by having procedures that are able to be accessed and understood
- Ensure information and processes for reporting concerns are culturally appropriate for all children
- Consider access and culturally appropriate language, photographs and artwork for Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability when drafting communications materials. Where required the school will engage with parents of Aboriginal children, local Aboriginal communities or an Aboriginal community controlled organisation to review information and processes
- Translating school information (including information about children's rights, child safe policies, statements of commitment and reporting and response procedures) into relevant community languages, including relevant Aboriginal languages if appropriate.

- Gathering feedback from children through surveys such as teacher devised surveys and the Student Attitude to School Survey regarding their connectedness to peers, safety and wellbeing and implement improvements based on this feedback
- Enable children to express their views and make suggestions on what child safety means to them
- Provide professional learning for staff on methods of empowering children and encouraging children's participation
- Raising awareness in the community about children's rights, for example through staff conversations with families and communications in the newsletters

Montpellier Primary School ensures that students have strong voice and agency in their learning. They learn to articulate what they are learning, how they know they will be successful, how well they are going and what their next steps are for learning.

Students are actively involved in their learning and assessment and are empowered to understand their own learning by setting individual learning goals. These goals are developed, reviewed and monitored in collaboration with the classroom teacher and the student. Our students engage in authentic learning experiences that are meaningful and relevant to them, driven by their interest. This empowers them to influence their own learning and to challenge themselves to develop new skills. This also encourages self reflection and intrinsic reward. We equip our students for their future by having:

- High expectations
- Positive attitudes
- Diverse opportunities
- A safe learning culture

#### **Resources:**

##### **Engagement Policy**

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/Pages/policydev.aspx>

<http://www.safeschoolshub.edu.au/home>

##### **Healthy Together Achievement Program**

<http://www.achievementprogram.healthytogether.vic.gov.au/>

**KidsMatter** <http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/primary>

##### **Building Resilience: A model to support children and young people**

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/health/Pages/resilience.aspx>

##### **Resources to support child abuse awareness and prevention**

##### **Daniel Morcombe Child Safety Curriculum Government schools see:**

<https://fuse.education.vic.gov.au/pages/Teacher.aspx> (Edumail password is required before searching Daniel Morcombe Child Safety Curriculum)

Parents see: <http://education.qld.gov.au/parents/school-life/child-safety-curriculum.html>

**Child Wise Personal Safety Education Program** <http://www.childwise.org.au/page/21/wise-child-protective-behaviours>

#### **Review Cycle**

This policy was last updated and ratified on 16/09/19 following review and development by School Council. It is scheduled for review in September 2021