

CHILD SAFE POLICY

PURPOSE

The child safety policy sets out the school's approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe; and provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

SCOPE

This policy will apply to all staff, volunteers, contractors and whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people.

POLICY

RIVER GUM PRIMARY'S COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

In line with Ministerial Order No 870 (available at www.vrqa.gov.au/childsafe), River Gum Primary school has developed a Policy and Code of conduct to ensure child safety.

Our organisation is committed to child safety. Ensuring the safety of children is everybody's responsibility and everybody's business. We aim to create a culture where protection of children from abuse is part of our everyday thinking and practice.

We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.

We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

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. Ensuring children's safety is a top priority for us at River Gum Primary School.

We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

Our organisation is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

Our organisation has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.

Our organisations is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, the safety of children in Out Of Home Care and for the safety of children with a disability.



We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

There are **SEVEN STANDARDS** as outlined in the Ministerial order, as scribed below.

STANDARD 1

Organisations must have strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements.

STANDARD 2

Organisations must have a child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety.

STANDARD 3

Organisations must have a code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children

STANDARD 4

Organisations must have screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel

STANDARD 5

Organisations must have processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.

STANDARD 6

Organisations must have strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse.

STANDARD 7

Organisations must have strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

OUR CHILDREN

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally
- promote the safety of children in Out Of Home Care



OUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, the safety of children with a disability & the safety of children in Out Of Home Care.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as monitoring that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to this organisation's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, Employee Conduct Branch depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

RECRUITMENT

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check or Victorian Institute of Teaching Registration and to provide evidence of this Check.

We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.



FAIR PROCEDURES FOR PERSONNEL

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

PRIVACY

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

• **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.

• **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

The Crimes Amendment (Grooming) Act 2014, introduces the offence of Grooming for sexual conduct with a child under the age of 16 years. If you develop reasonable belief this is a reportable offence.

• Our school will notify the Department's Employee Conduct Branch (9637 2594) if we become aware of an allegation of 'reportable conduct'.

RISK MANAGEMENT

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).



REGULAR REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every year or earlier where indicated, as part of risk management process. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities, people with a disability and children in Out Of Home Care.

ALLEGATIONS, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

Our organisation takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

RELATED POLICIES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

[Child Safe Code of Conduct](#)

[Child Safe Statement of Commitment](#)

[Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations \(including Mandatory Reporting\)](#)

[Duty of Care](#)

[Child Protection and Child Safe Standard \(PROTECT\)](#)



REVIEW CYCLE

PREPARED BY	LYN HEMPEL
REVIEWED IN	AUGUST 2019
REVIEWED BY STAFF	20/08/2019
REVIEWED BY C.C	20/08/2019
REVIEWED & RATIFIED BY SCHOOL COUNCIL	20/08/2019
NEXT REVIEW DATE	AUGUST 2020

