

Child Safe Policy

Purpose

The Kerrimuir Primary School child safe environments 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 applies to all staff, volunteers, and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people across a range of school forums (e.g. camps, excursions, incursions, online) and outside of school hours.

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

- At Kerrimuir Primary School we are committed to the safety and empowerment of all children.
- Kerrimuir has a zero tolerance of child abuse. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently. As a school we have a legal and moral obligation to contact The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) if we are concerned about a child's safety and well being.
- Kerrimuir Primary School is committed to the prevention of child abuse and identifying risks early, whilst removing and reducing these risks where possible. Kerrimuir uses an extremely thorough process when recruiting all staff and volunteers, which includes the Working With Children Check (WWCC) as a minimum for Educational Support (ES) staff, and a current Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration for teaching staff, which includes a regular full Police Check.
- At Kerrimuir we promote diversity and acceptance – we encourage diversity, and celebrate the diverse cultural inheritance of our students, staff and school families.

Implementation

Policies and procedures outlining school's approach to the Child Safe Standards are outlined below:

- Children participate in weekly classes and daily discussions that focus on building relationships, developing social skills and resilience and promoting emotional wellbeing. This includes the use of frequent circle time, to give students a voice. We ensure Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is a significant part of our daily curriculum.
- Kerrimuir has employed a Student Well-Being Worker (SWBW) to support students and their families. The role of the SWBW is to provide counselling for students, host lunchtime clubs and activities for students, support teachers and students in the classroom, and to create and foster community links for the families of Kerrimuir.

- Children are taught specific personal safety lessons as a part of the curriculum in all classes from Prep to Grade 6.
- Kerrimuir uses Restorative Practices as a tool to manage student misconduct. The process of Restorative Practice focuses on repairing student relationships and giving all the students the opportunity to share and recount their experiences in a fair and just manner. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their deeds and to restore the relationships that have been affected. Other natural consequences, which arise from behaviour where others are hurt physically or emotionally, will also be applied.
- Kerrimuir has four values *Care for People and the Environment, Achieve our Best, Respect Ourselves and Others and Educating your Child for the Future* that are promoted throughout the school and these values are used as the building blocks to creating and maintaining a safe and empowering environment.

PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES- OPERATIONAL

- All staff members are required to participate in regular training and education on child abuse risks, which ensure that everyone understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility. All staff members are also required to regularly complete e-learning modules relating to Mandatory Reporting.
- Throughout the recruitment process all applicants are considered based upon skills and qualifications. Prior to employment applicants must respond to a key selection criteria in writing.
- All teaching staff members must have VIT registration, which includes a police check and all support staff and volunteers must have a Working With Children Check.
- Prior to recruitment being completed, the school checks the DET Suitability For Employment database on EduPay regarding staff who are not able to be re-employed, to ensure the applicant does not have restrictions placed upon them.
- All staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our Codes of Conduct, which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children [the broader code for each sector of the school community – staff, parents and students, as well as the Child Safe Code of Conduct for school staff members and volunteers, as well as groups using the school over weekends].
- Staff members are trained to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse. They understand the responsibility they have as mandated professionals to report potential issues of physical and/ or emotional harm to the Department of Health and Human Services.
- As a part of the staff induction program staff members are informed of correct protocols should they have concerns about a child's safety. This process is reviewed annually with all staff members.
- All allegations of abuse and safety concerns are recorded using Compass Chronicle, including investigation updates. Such records

are not available to all staff members, as is regulated under the Privacy Act.

- Volunteers are supervised to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse.
- All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they are staff members, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety.
- The Principal and Assistant Principal act as the over-arching Student and Staff Well-being leaders, and take responsibility to ensure all people on the school site understand the zero tolerance for child abuse throughout the school, and at all times. Child safety is one of our major concerns at school.
- School policy requires that staff members who need to be in a classroom or meeting room alone with a child must either leave the door open, whilst knowing all school locks allow anyone to leave the building at any time, even when the building is locked from the outside; or speak with the child in an open space; or be with another staff member or students. In this way, both students and staff members are highly visible at all times.
- If it is required of a staff member to assist a child with toileting and/ or showering, there must always be two staff members present. Where possible, parents will be asked to undertake this process.
- If a staff member has any suspicion of untoward behaviour toward a child, it must be reported to the Principal or Assistant Principal immediately, whether this has occurred during the school day, or out of hours. From there, appropriate mandatory reporting will commence. The Staff member reporting the suspicions will complete the Incident Report (see Appendix A)
- If a child makes a statement that could mean they are being abused, this too must be reported. Education Support staff are asked to discuss this with the Principal or Assistant Principal, and then the mandated staff member or the ES staff member can follow through with normal reporting procedures.
- Staff members will not decide that anything said by a student is unlikely to be true. If something reportable is said, appropriate procedure must be followed.
- If the school is being used outside of school hours, the same policy is relevant to those people who are using the school. This policy will be given to anyone hiring the school facilities or using the school as a meeting place.
- Staff members will adhere to the process outlined in Appendix B.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

- At Kerrimuir staff members take their 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 be deemed to have committed 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.
 - Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.
 - Kerrimuir Primary School has risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments and online environments.
 - Staff members take all allegations seriously and the school has procedures in place to manage allegations quickly. Our staff members are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.
 - All staff members have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if they 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.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed annually and following significant incidents if they occur.

APPENDIX A

INCIDENT REPORT

All incident reports must be given to the principal, Karyn Simes-Martin.

Incident details

Date of incident:	
Time of incident:	
Location of incident:	
Name(s) of child/children involved:	
Name(s) of staff/volunteer involved:	

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

Does the child identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

(Mark with an 'X' as applicable)

No Yes, Aboriginal Yes, Torres Strait Islander

Please categorise the incident

Physical violence

Sexual offence

Serious emotional or psychological abuse

Serious neglect

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

Please describe the incident

When did it take place?	
Who was involved?	
What did you see?	
Other information	



Parent/carer/child use

Date of incident:	
Time of incident:	
Location of incident:	
Name(s) of child/children involved:	
Name(s) of staff/volunteer involved:	

Office use:

Date incident report received:	
Staff member managing incident:	
Follow-up date:	

Has the incident been reported?

Child protection	
Police	
Another third party (please specify):	

Incident reporter wishes to remain anonymous?

(Mark with an 'X' as applicable)

Yes No

APPENDIX B

If a child discloses an incident of abuse to you

- Try and separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully.
- Let the child use his/her own words to explain what has occurred.
- Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared with others, such as with their parent/carer, the Principal, or the police.
- Do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
- Complete an incident report form (See Appendix A)
- As soon as possible after the disclosure report the disclosure to the principal, Karyn Simes-Martin, police or child protection and record the information using the child's words.
- Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

If a parent/carer says their child has been abused in your organisation or raises a concern

- Explain that Kerrimuir has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.
- Ask about the wellbeing of the child.
- Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in his/her own words.
- Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to record all details.
- Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the principal, Karyn Simes-Martin, the police or child protection.
- Do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together.
- Advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.
- Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.
- You need to be aware that some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers in reporting allegations of abuse. For example, people from some cultures may experience anxiety when talking with police, and communicating in English may be a barrier for some. You need to be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible, such as having an interpreter present (who could be a friend or family member).
- If an allegation of abuse involves an Aboriginal child, you will need to ensure a culturally appropriate response. A way to help ensure this could include engaging with parents of Aboriginal children, local Aboriginal communities or an Aboriginal community controlled organisations to review policies and procedures.
- Some children with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident. For example, children with hearing or cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident, including through sign language interpreters. Advice on

communicating with people with a disability can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services website <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/community-involvement/people-with-a-disability-in-the-community/communicate-and-consult-with-people-with-a-disability/communication-with-people-with-disabilities>.

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

Legal responsibilities

While the child safe standards focus on organisations, every adult who reasonably believes that a child has been abused, whether in their organisation or not, has an obligation to report that belief to authorities.

The **failure to disclose** criminal offence requires all adults (aged 18 and over) who hold a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 to disclose that information to police (unless they have a reasonable excuse not to, for example because they fear for their safety or the safety of another).

More information about failure to disclose is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>

While failure to disclose only covers child sexual abuse, all adults should report other forms of child abuse to authorities. Failure to disclose does not change mandatory reporting responsibilities.

More information about mandatory reporting is available in the *Child protection manual* <www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/intake/mandatory-reporting>.

Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about how to make a report to child protection <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first>.

The **failure to protect** criminal offence (commenced on 1 July 2015) applies where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation. A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.

Further information about failure to protect can be found on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence, and the Department of Health and Human Services website>.