

Kerrimuir Primary School

Commitment to Child Safety

Purpose

Kerrimuir Primary School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

Kerrimuir Primary School has zero tolerance for **child abuse**.

Kerrimuir Primary School is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability, and all other children who may be at risk.

Kerrimuir Primary School's commitment to **Child Safety** applies to all **school environments** (inclusive of physical and online environments).

Every person involved in Kerrimuir Primary School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

Kerrimuir Primary School is committed to children's safety, best interests and rights. Kerrimuir Primary School will inform children and young people about their rights, including a right to safety, information, participation, and the right to be listened to.

Scope and Audience

This policy is for all members of the Kerrimuir Primary School Community, and any on site volunteers or contractors

Kerrimuir Primary School's Statement of Commitment and Principles for Child Safety

In its planning, decision-making and operations Kerrimuir Primary School will:

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety.
2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives.
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children.
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount
5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development
7. Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and

10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

Policy and Procedure

A child safe culture:

Kerrimuir Primary School are committed to a culture of Child safety. Members of the school community (teachers, parents, students, etc.) feel empowered to discuss child safety and raise any concerns about child abuse.

Good practices at Kerrimuir Primary School to achieve a child safe culture include:

- effective governance arrangements are in place to authorise and agree on strategies
- the goal of child safety is embedded in school documentation to convey the vision, mission and strategic direction of the school in relation to child safety
- recognising the diverse needs of children in the school. It is important that Kerrimuir Primary School is an inclusive and culturally safe place for children and parents
- including child safety as a standing item on Leadership Team and Staff Meeting agendas
- school-based roles and responsibilities for child safety are known and understood across the school community
- students, school staff, and members of the school community know who to contact if they have a concern about child safety in the school. This information is kept up to date, and is accessible to all
- we build capability by:
 - making training available in relation to key responsibilities
 - including responsibilities in position descriptions or as part of staff development processes
 - providing ongoing induction and training for all staff and volunteers in child safety including how to recognise and respond to child abuse.
- Child safety is a core part of the school's public and internal communication and the school's communications about the child safety strategies:
 - identify key people and also covers the roles of all people in the school community
 - cover the range of school environments (e.g. camps, online)
 - use a mix of communication tools (verbal, online, print)
 - provide opportunities for staff, students, parents and the school community to engage with child safety (e.g. community forums).

Roles and Responsibilities of all persons involved in the protection of children at Kerrimuir Primary School

- Primary School Teachers **must** make a report to Child Protection as soon as practicable after forming a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection from significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse.
- Any staff member (non-mandated) who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection may report their concerns to Child Protection. This

means any person is able to make a report to Child Protection when they believe that a child or young person is at risk of harm and in need of protection.

- Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child under 16 by an adult must report that information to police - failure to do so is a criminal offence.
- Staff members, whether or not mandated, need to report their belief when the belief is formed in the course of undertaking their professional duties. A report must be made as soon as practicable after forming the belief and on each occasion on which they become aware of any further reasonable grounds for the belief.
- People in a position of authority within organisations must take action to protect children as soon as they become aware that a person associated with their organisation poses a substantial risk of sexually abusing children. Failure to do so is a criminal offence.
- Every reasonable precaution must be taken to protect children being educated and cared for by the service from harm and from any hazard likely to cause injury
- The approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that the nominated supervisors and staff members at the service who work with children are advised of:
 - the existence and application of the current child protection law
 - any obligations that they may have under that law (regulation 84).
- Confidentiality is provided for reporters under the CYFA. The CYFA prevents disclosure of the name or any information likely to lead to the identification of a person who has made a report in accordance with legislation, except in specific circumstances.

The identity of a reporter must remain confidential unless:

- the reporter chooses to inform the child, young person or family of the report
- the reporter consents in writing to their identity being disclosed
- a court or tribunal decides that it is necessary for the identity of the reporter to be disclosed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child
- a court or tribunal decides that, in the interests of justice, the reporter is required to attend court to provide evidence.

Actions to be taken in support of Commitment to Child Safety

- a) Kerrimuir Primary School will monitor the school's adherence to its child safety policy and statement of commitment by:
 - advertising in and around the school that we are a Child Safe school;
 - inducting all new employees, contractors and volunteers in **child-connected** work into Child Safe practices before they begin work on the school site;
 - keeping a risk register;
 - ensuring that all **school staff** members and school councillors are trained in child safety; and
 - updating our policies annually to ensure that we stay abreast of DET policy.
- b) Kerrimuir Primary School will support, encourage and enable school staff, parents, and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters by:

- teaching all members of the school community about Child Safety annually;
 - being open to communication with all members of the school community;
 - listening when children are talking; and
 - ensuring that the reporting process is known.
- c) Kerrimuir Primary School will support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse by:
- listening;
 - following the correct procedures for mandatory reporting,
 - offering support or counselling through the assistance of SSSO officers after the during and after the incident is being/has been dealt with; and
 - Continuing to offer support as long as it is deemed to be necessary.
- d) Kerrimuir Primary School will enforce the child safety standards and abide by its reporting obligations by:
- Ensuring that all staff members complete the Mandatory Reporting e-module annually
 - Ensuring that all staff members understand their obligation to mandatorily report
 - Keeping a risk register
- e) Kerrimuir Primary School will show its commitment to Child safety by:
- Maintaining and annually updating a risk management plan;
 - Keeping a detailed risk register as appropriate; and
 - Maintaining and annually updating the Kerrimuir Primary School Child Safe policy.

Child Safety in the Recruitment, Selection and Management of Staff (including contractors and volunteers)

Kerrimuir Primary School has rigorous procedures in place in the recruitment and screening process, meeting the Child Safety requirements for staff selection, supervision and management practices (Clause 10 Ministerial Order No 870). We take our responsibility for keeping all children safe very seriously.

1. Each job or category of jobs for school staff that involves child-connected work must have clear statements regarding the child safety requirements of the role and the expectations of the occupant by:
 - Ensuring that position descriptions for all new positions include the standard 'Child safe environments' clause as provided in the 'Recruitment in Schools' Guide.
 - Promoting and embedding the Child Safety Code of Conduct in accordance with Standard 3 for existing staff members.
 - Noting the child safe clause that has been included for all job categories (Principal Class, Teacher, Paraprofessional and Education Support) in the Roles and Responsibilities document.
 - Noting that the Principal Class Contract of Employment has been updated to include reference to the Standards, and all contracts offered on or after 1 August 2016 include the revised wording.
2. All applicants for jobs that involve child-connected work for the school must be informed about the school's child safety practices (including the code of conduct).
3. In accordance with any applicable legal requirement or school policy, the school must make reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record information about a person whom it proposes to engage to perform child connected tasks. For example:

- The Principal will implement practices to ensure that she is satisfied an external applicant is suitable for child connected work prior to the person's employment.
 - The casual relief and school council pre-employment requirements are understood and checked.
 - Ensure that current letters of offer are used (see Forms-Teaching-Service page on HRWeb).
4. The school must ensure that appropriate supervision or support arrangements are in place in relation to induction and continuing suitability for child connected work.
5. The school must implement practices that enable the school governing authority to be satisfied that people engaged in child-connected work perform appropriately in relation to child safety.

When recruiting new staff or volunteers we consider the applicant's:

- motivation to work with children (personal or professional)
- relevant and verifiable child-related work experience
- understanding of professional boundaries
- communication skills

We understand that specialist roles may present different child safety risks for the school.

At Kerrimuir Primary School as a matter of good practice, new employees and volunteers are supervised regularly to ensure they understand their role and learn skills, as well as to check that their behaviour towards children is appropriate. Any inappropriate behaviour should be reported to a member of the Leadership Team, Department of Health and Human Services (child protection) or police if a child is believed to be at imminent risk.

Raising and Reporting concerns about Child Safety

At Kerrimuir Primary School we follow the four critical actions when responding to an incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse:

1. Respond to an emergency- ensure immediate safety, by:
 - separating the alleged victim and others involved, ensuring all parties are supervised by a school staff member
 - arranging and providing urgent medical assistance where necessary by:
 - administering first aid assistance
 - calling 000 for an ambulance and following any instructions from emergency service officers/paramedics
 - calling 000 for urgent police assistance if:
 - the person who is alleged to have engaged in the abuse poses an immediate risk to the health and safety of any person. You should also be prepared to identify a contact person at the school for future liaison with police.
 - Preserve evidence (if any)

2. Report to authorities. As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you must report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and child sexual abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

If the source of suspected abuse comes from within the school (this includes any forms of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor or volunteer) you must:

- Contact Victoria Police via your local police station
- Report internally to school principal/leadership team, the Department's Employee Conduct Branch and Security Services Unit, on (03) 9637 2934 and identify a contact person at the school for future liaison with Child Protection and Victoria Police and seek advice about contacting parents.

If the source of suspected abuse comes from within the family or community you must:

- Report to DHHS Child Protection if a child is considered to be:
 - in need of protection due to child abuse
 - at risk of being, harmed (or has been harmed), and the harm has had, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.
- Report suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police
- Report internally to:
 - School principal and/or leadership team (all instances), highlighting:
 - the details of the suspected child abuse or risk of abuse including the name of those involved
 - any immediate actions taken to protect the safety of the child
 - your report or intention to report to DHHS Child Protection, Victoria Police and/or Child FIRST
 - possible steps that can be taken to contact parents (if appropriate) and support the student
- Also report to:
 - Government Schools: Security Services Unit on (03) 9637 2934

If the source of suspected abuse comes from another student at the school you must:

- as soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you must report incidents, disclosures and suspicions of student sexual offending as soon as possible to:
 - Victoria Police on 000 (all instances)
 - DHHS Child Protection if you believe that:
 - the victim's parent/s are unable or unwilling to protect the child

- the student who is alleged to have engaged in the student sexual offending is aged over 10 and under 15 years, is exhibiting sexually abusive behaviours, and may be in need of therapeutic treatment to address these behaviours
- the student who is alleged to have engaged in the student sexual offending may be displaying physical and behavioural indicators of being the victim of child abuse.

ALSO report internally to:

- School principal and/or leadership team (all instances)
- Government schools: Security Services Unit

If the incident, suspicion or disclosure relates to an international student you will most likely be required to make an additional report.

- Government schools: Contact the International Education Division on (03) 9637 2990.

You must make a new report in any circumstance where you become aware of any further incidents, or disclosures, or a form a new suspicion that a child is a victim of offending, or has engaged in student sexual offending.

Every report is critical to protecting a child by building evidence and enabling authorities to gain a clearer understanding of the risks.

This means that you must make a report to protect a child even if:

- DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police were previously involved or are already involved with the child and/or their family
- Staff are aware that another party, such as a family member, has already raised concerns with the relevant authorities.

If you're unsure whether to take action, or what action to take, you should discuss this with your leadership team.

It is strongly recommend that you document your actions.

3. Contact parents or carers.

Where advised to be appropriate, schools should make sensitive and professional contact with parents as soon as possible on the day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion. This enables parents to take steps to:

- prevent or limit their child's exposure to further abuse
- ensure that their child receives the support that they require.

The principal and/or reporting staff member (ideally together) should inform the parents/carers of the child impacted by the suspected child abuse.

During this conversation it is important to:

- remain calm
- be empathic to feelings
- validate concerns
- provide appropriate details of the incident, disclosure and/or suspicion of child abuse
- outline the action the school staff have taken to date
- inform them of who the incident, disclosure and/or suspicion has been reported to
- provide the name and contact phone number of DHHS Child Protection and/or the police officer who is investigating
- provide information on whether they are likely to be contacted by DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police (if known)
- inform them that the investigation may take some time and ask what further information they would like and how school staff can assist them
- assure them that school wellbeing staff can provide support to the child. Victorian government school staff can make referrals to student support services or other wellbeing staff based at the school
- invite the parents/carers to attend a student support group meeting where a student support plan can be prepared to ensure that appropriate support can be provided for their child.

For advice and support on contacting parents:

- Government schools can contact Student Incident and Recovery Unit on (03) 9637 2934

4. Provide ongoing support.

Experiences of child abuse can cause trauma and significantly impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children. In addition to reporting and referral into relevant authorities, as a school staff member you play a central role in addressing this trauma and have a duty of care to ensure that the students feels safe and supported at school.

Providing holistic support to address the trauma and wellbeing issues associated with child abuse is best achieved through careful planning and working in partnership with wellbeing professionals, parents/carers and educators.

If a student is impacted by suspected abuse, and it is deemed appropriate, school staff must:

- establish regular communication between staff and the child's parent/ guardian/carer (if this is appropriate) to discuss a child's progress wellbeing and the effectiveness of planned strategies
- convene a student support group to plan ongoing monitoring, support, and follow-up of the child's health and wellbeing (student support groups usually comprise school wellbeing staff, teachers, allied health professionals and where appropriate the student and/or their parent/carer)
- develop and implement a student support plan, which documents the planned support strategies and includes timeframes for review (where possible, these support strategies should be informed by allied health and wellbeing professional with expertise in addressing child abuse and trauma).

Where appropriate school staff should engage allied health and wellbeing supports and services to meet the wellbeing needs of the child impacted by abuse, including:

- wellbeing staff members
- allied health and wellbeing professionals engaged by the student and families.

Allied health and wellbeing professionals can provide:

- intensive support to children and their families
- critical input into student support plans
- advice to school staff members on how to appropriately support the student.

Whilst a child's background should not impact on a decision to report suspected abuse, school staff need to be sensitive to a child's individual circumstances when providing support and working with families impacted by abuse.

It is a requirement under the Child Safe Standards that school governing authorities must "take account of the diversity of all children", including (but not limited to) the needs of:

- Children with disabilities
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children
- Children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds
- Students with refugee backgrounds
- International students

In consultation with the Student Incident and Recovery Unit (government schools) and Victoria Police and/or DHHS Child Protection (if appropriate), schools:

- must develop a student support plan to determine and document support strategies for students who are the alleged victim/s and students impacted by student sexual offending to address their wellbeing
- should (where appropriate) convene a student support group to inform planning
- should (where appropriate) consult with wellbeing professionals (including student support services officers in government schools) to support the student.
- should (where appropriate) make referrals into specialised non-school based supports, including Centres Against Sexual Assault who provide expert support for victims of sexual assault.

In consultation with the Student Incident and Recovery Unit (government schools) and Victoria Police and/or DHHS Child Protection, schools:

- must develop and regularly review a student support plan to establish and implement safety and support strategies, including return to school strategies
- should (where appropriate) convene a student support group to inform the student support plan

- should (where appropriate) engage with wellbeing professionals (including student support services officers in government schools) to support the student who has engaged in student sexual offending.
- should (where appropriate) make referrals into specialised non-school based supports, including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) who provide specialist clinical mental health treatment and care.

In some cases children aged over 10 and under 15 years may be referred to Sexually Abusive Behaviour Treatment Services. These services provide treatment for 12 to 24 months to ensure that early intervention services are provided to prevent ongoing and more serious sexual offences in adulthood.

Often this referral will be made by DHHS Child Protection and a young person may be placed on a Therapeutic Treatment Order and/or a Therapeutic Treatment Placement Order. Children, young people and their families are also able to access treatment programs in a voluntary capacity.

If as a result of student sexual offending, a student needs to transfer to another school:

- government schools must contact their regional director and the Student Incident and Recovery Unit

It can be stressful for other children involved in any incidents, disclosures or suspicions of child abuse. Principals must ensure that other impacted children are offered and provided appropriate support.

All children (including children who are alleged to have perpetrated abuse) must be independently supported in any interviews conducted by Victoria Police or DHHS Child Protection at school.

Where possible and appropriate the child's parent/carer should be present for these interviews. However if this is not appropriate or practicable the Principal (or delegate) may be identified as the independent person or support person for the child for the purpose of the interview.

It can also be stressful for staff involved in any incidents, disclosures or suspicions of child abuse. Principals must support impacted staff members to access necessary support.

Government school staff requiring wellbeing support can contact the Employee Assistance Program on 1300 361 008.

A subpoena/witness summons is a court order that compels you to produce documents, or attend court and give evidence, or to do both of these things.

You are usually issued with a subpoena/witness summons because one of the parties to the legal proceedings believes that you may have information/documentation that is relevant to the legal proceeding.

If a government school staff member receives a subpoena or witness summons in the context of their employment, they should contact the Legal Division for advice.

(03) 9637 3146

Department of Education Legal Division

There may be concerns or complaints about the school staff's management of an incident, in particular by parents/carers. This is a very stressful time for parents/carers, and concerns that they do not believe have been dealt with fairly may quickly escalate.

As a first step school staff must consider whether the complaint raises any concerns about unreported abuse and/or risk of abuse.

Definitions (as outlined in Ministerial Order 870)

1. **Child abuse** includes –
 - Any act committed against a child involving:
 - a sexual offence or
 - an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
 - the infliction, on a child, of:
 - physical violence or
 - serious emotional or psychological harm
 - serious neglect of a child.
2. **Child-connected work** means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.
3. **Child safety** encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.
4. **School environment** means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside of school hours, including:
 - A campus of the school
 - Online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
 - Other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events)
5. **School staff** being: an individual working in a school environment who is:
 - Directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority; a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary); or
 - A minister of religion

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually as part of the Child Safe requirements.