



## **Policies**

### **Child Safe Policy February 2019**

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#### **RATIONALE**

Our child safe policy will be publicly available to help raise awareness about the importance of child safety in our school and demonstrate our commitment to protecting children from abuse.

#### **Our commitment to child safety**

##### **1. GUIDELINES:**

- 1.1 Our school is committed to child safety.
- 1.2 We want children to be safe, happy and empowered.
- 1.3 We support and respect all children, as well as staff and volunteers.
- 1.4 We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
- 1.5 We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- 1.6 We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are concerned about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- 1.7 We are committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- 1.8 We have robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- 1.9 We are committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- 1.10 We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.
- 1.11 We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support the leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.
- 1.12 If we believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

##### **2. IMPLEMENTATION**

###### **Our children**

- 2.1 This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our school.
- 2.2 When it is deemed appropriate we will involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them.
- 2.3 We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.
- 2.4 We promote diversity and tolerance in our school, 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.

###### **Our staff and volunteers**

- 2.5 This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our school.
- 2.6 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.
- 2.7 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**

- 2.8 Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.
- 2.9 The HEPS 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.
- 2.10 We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.
- 2.11 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, and the safety of children with a disability.
- 2.12 New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

## **Recruitment**

- 2.13 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 school understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.
- 2.14 We abide with Merit and Equity in relation to recruitment respecting all applicants including Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.
- 2.15 All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check.
- 2.16 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.
- 2.17 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**

- 2.18 The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern.
- 2.19 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.
- 2.20 We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates.
- 2.21 All records are securely stored.
- 2.22 If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we will provide updates if appropriate to children and families on progress and any actions we as a school take.

## **Privacy**

- 2.23 All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy as referenced in the HEPS Privacy Policy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety.
- 2.24 We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected.
- 2.25 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**

HEPS 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.

Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

## **Risk management**

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. 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 and online environments.

## **EVALUATION**

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. 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 and people with a disability.

### **Allegations, concerns and complaints**

Our school 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, volunteers and visitors 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.

Date ratified: Monday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2019 (to be ratified at first School Council meeting of 2019)