



Managing the Risk of Child Abuse Policy and Procedure

POLICY DETAILS

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| Policy Title | Managing the Risk of Child Abuse Policy and Procedure |
| Creation Date | 17 th August 2017 |
| Review Date | 30 th March 2018 |
| Ratified | By School Council August 2017 |

RATIONALE

Harcourt Valley Primary School fundamentally believes that all children have the right to a life that is free from harm. Our school aims to provide an environment that is free from any type of abuse and foster a child's growth and development as per the individual requirements of each child.

Staff at our school are aware of their obligations under the law in regards to the welfare of children and at all times uphold their obligation. In addition to this, our school aims to provide regular training to all staff on child protection issues to ensure that, in the sad event a child has suffered abuse, the school can act quickly in the best interests of the child. All children enrolling at our school deserve a smooth transition that enables them to become part of our school with a minimum of disruption and maximum support.

All Victorian schools are required to have a child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety that details:

- the principles that will guide the school in developing policies and procedures to create and maintain a child safe school environment; and
- the actions the school proposes to take to:
 - i. demonstrate its commitment to child safety and monitor the school's adherence to its child safety policy;
 - ii. support, encourage and enable school staff, parents, and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters; and
 - iii. support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse


We have zero tolerance of child abuse. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.

AIMS

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

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility. References: Victorian Child Safe Standards <http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/Pages/resources.html>

- 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, and the safety of children with a disability.
- 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 checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to this organisation's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further in the Student Engagement and Inclusion policy). 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.

A Child Safety Code of Conduct:

To promote child safety in the school environment we acknowledge the following:

All students have a right to:

- Take part in learning programs that meet their individual needs.
- Feel secure and to be safe in a caring and supportive environment.
- Work and play without interference in an atmosphere of harmony and cooperation.
- Receive respect, kindness and courtesy and to be treated with fairness.
- Have learning continue without disruption in a supportive environment.
- Be valued for their individuality including; race, gender, cultural, physical or intellectual diversity.
- Expect the school rules are fair, consistently implemented and respect the rights of all involved.

All students have a responsibility to:

- Care and value themselves, others, teachers and the school community.
- Be safety conscious in relation to themselves and others.
- Treat others with respect and good manners.
- Keep the guidelines of good behaviour, modelling and supporting school rules.
- Develop a sense of accountability for their own actions.
- Work to achieve their personal best whilst allowing others to do the same.
- Allow for others to learn and to respect the rights of others.
- Explore their full potential in their learning.

School staff adhere to the following standards about the ways in which school staff are expected to behave with children:

- School staff provide opportunities for all students to learn
- School staff treat their students with courtesy and dignity
- School staff work within the limits of their professional expertise
- School staff maintain objectivity in their relationships with students
- School staff are always in a professional relationship with the students in their school whether at school or not

IMPLEMENTATION

Procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of suspected child abuse

Forming a belief on reasonable grounds.

A person may form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection after becoming aware that a child or young person's health, safety or wellbeing is at risk.

Reporting a belief

Mandated staff members (teachers and Principal) 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. Staff members, whether or not mandated, need to report to the principal 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. If one staff member has a different view from another staff member about making a report and the staff member continues to hold the belief that a child is in need of protection, that person is obliged to make a report. Please refer to the Child Protection Reporting Policy for procedures in response to allegations of child abuse.

These procedures do not:


- prohibit or discourage school staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse to a person external to the school;
- state or imply that it is the victim's responsibility to inform the police or other authorities of the allegation;
- require staff to make a judgment about the truth of the allegation of child abuse; or
- prohibit staff from making records in relation to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse.

Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

- Risk management strategies have been developed within the following school policies:
 - Child Protection Reporting Policy
 - Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy
 - Supervision and Duty of Care Policy and Procedure
 - References:
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/dutyofcare.aspx>
- If the school identifies risks of child abuse occurring in one or more school environments the authority must make a record of those risks and specify the action(s) the school will take to reduce or remove the risks (risk controls).


Explanatory note: Different risk controls may be necessary for particular groups of children depending on the nature of the risk and the diversity characteristics of children affected by the risk.


- As part of its risk management strategy and practices, the school must monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls.

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- At least annually, the school must ensure that appropriate guidance and training is provided to the individual members of the school staff about:
 - individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse;
 - child abuse risks in the school environment; and
 - the school's current child safety standards. Strategies to promote child empowerment and participation
 - The school authority must develop strategies to deliver appropriate education about:
 - standards of behaviour for students attending the school;
 - healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality);
 - resilience; and
 - child abuse awareness and prevention.
 - The school must promote the child safety standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children.

PROCEDURE

1. 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 prior to working with children at Harcourt Valley Primary School. Please see our Working with Children Check Policy for further information.
2. 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.
3. The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to staff. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.
4. We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our Incident Report Form, including investigation updates.
5. All records are securely stored.
6. 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.
7. All staff must successfully complete the DET online modules regarding Mandatory Reporting on a yearly basis.
8. Student wellbeing is the responsibility of ALL school staff and volunteers within the school environment when they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection.
9. All concerns must be reported immediately to the Principal. New staff and volunteers will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of their induction procedure.
10. The Principal will keep a record of all discussions about a student with whom there is a concern.
11. If a belief has been formed by a staff member that sexual or physical abuse has taken place, documentation must be completed and submitted to the Principal within 24 hours.

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12. The Principal will contact the Department of Health and Human Services as soon as possible to make an official notification through the North Division Intake on 1300 664 977. After hours – a call will be made to the After Hours Child Protection Emergency Service on 13 12 78.
 13. Members of the Department of Health & Human Services, or associated support or intervention services that visit the school following a notification, will interview staff and children only in the presence of a Principal or a staff member the child feels comfortable with.
 14. All documentation regarding Child Protection Reporting is to remain filed in the student confidential files which are kept in the Administration office.
 15. All reports, information sheets and subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and remain strictly confidential.
 16. All incidents are to be monitored, and any subsequent signs or indications of abuse are also to be reported.
 17. 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.
 18. Harcourt Valley Primary School takes our legal responsibilities very seriously, including:
 - a. Failure to disclose:
 - i. Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility.
 - ii. 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.
 - b. Failure to protect:
 - i. 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.
 - ii. Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties.
 - c. Risk Management
 - i. 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.
 - ii. 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).
 - d. Allegations, Concerns and Complaints
 - i. 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.
 - ii. A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed. Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website.

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19. Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available at www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence .
 20. 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 .
 21. 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.
 22. 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).
 23. 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.


The following procedures have been taken from the Child safe standards toolkit: resource six. The link to this is below in the Additional Information section.

If a child discloses an incident of abuse to you

1. Try and separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully.
2. Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred.
3. 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.
4. Explain to them that this information may need to be shared others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people in your organisation, or the police.
5. 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.
6. Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
7. Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together, if you think the child is able to do this.
8. As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to your manager or your organisation's child safety officer/champion,1 police or child protection.
9. 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

1. Explain that your organisation has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.
2. Ask about the wellbeing of the child.
3. Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words.

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4. Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
 5. Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the organisation's management or Child Safety Officer, the police or child protection.
 6. Do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.
 7. Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together.
 8. Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.
 9. Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

NOTE: 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).

DEFINITIONS IN THIS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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.

Child abuse includes:

- a. Any act committed against a child involving:
 - a. A sexual offence; or
 - b. An offence under Section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming; and.....
- b. The infliction, on a child, of:
 - a. Physical violence; or
 - b. Serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- c. Serious neglect of a child

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 school hours, including:

- a. A campus of the school
- b. Online school environments
- c. Other locations provided for by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards-resources>

POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed in conjunction with the school Principal each year by the elected School Council. Any changes will be made in accordance to the Victorian Education Department and VRQA guidelines. All revisions will be documented.



REVISION HISTORY

| Version | Date | Revisions Made |
|---------|---------|----------------|
| 1 | 17/8/17 | Policy created |