

Child Safe Policy

Rationale

Weeden Heights Primary School is committed to providing a safe, nurturing environment that encourages curiosity, promotes learning, personal growth and wellbeing for all students. We strive to develop adaptability and resilience so students can become valued members of the local and global communities and be prepared for future life experiences.

Weeden Heights Primary School is committed to child safety. The school:

- Ensures that students are safe, happy and empowered. Supports and respects all students, as well as staff and volunteers
- Is committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all students
- Has zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns are treated very seriously and consistently with robust policies and procedures
- Has legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when worried about a child's safety, which is followed rigorously
- Is committed to preventing child abuse and identifies risks early, and removes and reduces these risks. The school has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers and regularly trains and educates staff and volunteers on child abuse risks
- Supports and respects all students, as well as staff and volunteers. The school is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal students, students from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and provides a safe environment for students with a disability
- Has 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.

Implementation

Students

The students at Weeden Heights Primary School are empowered, vital and active participants. They are involved when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. The school listens to their views and respects what they have to say.

Weeden Heights Primary School promotes diversity and acceptance, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Ensure that students with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff, parent helpers and volunteers on how to behave with students at Weeden Heights Primary School. All staff, parent helpers and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with students. All staff, students and members of the wider community are given the opportunity to contribute to the code of conduct.

Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in Weeden Heights Primary School understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our culture aims for all staff, students and wider members of our community to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We support our staff through ongoing supervision and professional learning to protect students from abuse and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal students, the cultural safety of students from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of students with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure that they understand Weeden Heights Primary School's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting students from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards students 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

Weeden Heights Primary School takes all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with students. Selection criteria is developed and advertisements which clearly demonstrate the school's commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Weeden Heights Primary School understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

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

All people engaged by Weeden Heights Primary School, including volunteers and tradespeople, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this check.

Please see the [Working with Children Check](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au for further information.

We carry out reference checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people.

Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of students is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions made when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action are thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

Records of allegations of abuse and safety concerns using the 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 students 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 students, 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

Weeden Heights Primary School 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 Weeden Heights Primary School 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 students 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 students.

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 student on social media).

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Weeden Heights Primary School takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Staff are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all students, 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.

Resources

This Policy should be read in conjunction with and is underpinned by the:

- a) Mandatory Reporting Policy
- b) Behaviour Management Policy
- c) Bullying, Cyber-bullying and Harassment Policy
- d) Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy
- e) Student Welfare Policy
- f) Community Code of Conduct
- g) On-site Supervision of Students Policy
- h) Critical Incidents Policy
- i) Duty of Care Policy
- j) Integration Policy
- k) UV (Sunsmart) Policy
- l) Excursions Policy
- m) Incursion and Excursion (when learning from an external provider) Policy
- n) Agreed emailing protocols

Relevant Documents / Links

Ministerial Order No. 870

Further information on child safe standards can be found on the [Department of Health and Human Services website](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/children,-youth-and-family-services/creating-child-safe-organisations) <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/children,-youth-and-family-services/creating-child-safe-organisations>.

Additional resources for organisations in the child safe standards toolkit can be found on the [Department of Health and Human Services website](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards): <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards>. In particular, [An Overview to the Victorian child safe standards](#), has information to help organisations understand the requirements of each of the child safe standards, including examples of measures organisations can put in place, a self-audit tool and a glossary of key terms: <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/___data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc>

Registered schools can contact the Department of Education and Training:
child.safe.schools@edumail.vic.gov.au

Early childhood services operating under the *National Quality Framework or Children's Services Act 1996* should contact: licensed.childrens.services@edumail.vic.gov.au

Licensed children's services enquiry line: 1300 307 415

Evaluation

The Education Sub Committee and Weeden Heights staff will review the effectiveness of the school's Child Safe Policy on a cyclical basis in accordance with DET guidelines.

It will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and students 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.