



## Child Safe Policy

Victorian schools are required to have a statement of commitment to child safety, and a culture and processes that ensure the safety of all children and protect them from child abuse. Our child safe policy has been developed to demonstrate our strong commitment to child safety, and to establishing and maintaining child-safe and child-friendly environments. Our school's attitudes of *appreciation, commitment, enthusiasm, co-operation, curiosity, confidence, respect, creativity, independence, empathy, tolerance* and *integrity* underpin our child safe policies and practices.

### Burwood Heights Primary School and Kindergarten is committed to child safety.

- This organisation is committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
- We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust child safe policies and procedures.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we hold a reasonable belief that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical or sexual abuse or grooming. As Victorian Institute of Teaching registered staff, it is mandatory that we report these forms of abuse to Victoria Police and DHHS Child Protection. Support staff have a duty of care to report child abuse to authorities.
- We are committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing any 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.
- We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to ensuring the safety of children with a disability or vulnerable children.
- We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments and these are frequently monitored and reviewed to ensure a high culture of child safety.
- We have appointed a child safety officer to ensure all staff understand their Duty of Care responsibilities and their moral and legal obligations to report child abuse to the appropriate authorities and to support victims.
- We are committed to providing immediate support and comfort to children who disclose child abuse or are involved in suspected child abuse. The school helps connect children to professional services to provide safety, support and recovery from trauma.

### Definitions of Abuse and Duty to Report

- There are six recognised forms of child abuse: physical abuse, sexual abuse and “grooming”, emotional child abuse, neglect and family violence.
- The Victorian State Government defines these categories of abuse in the publication **PROTECT – Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Child Abuse**. This publication outlines the physical and behavioural indicators of each form of abuse and includes a flowchart titled **Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse**. This flowchart must

be adhered to by all staff, parents and volunteers when reporting an instance of abuse to authorities. The **PROTECT** publication is accessible in hard copy to all staff, and is available to all members of the school community through a hyperlink on the school website.

- As a duty of care obligation all members of the school community should report suspected physical abuse, sexual abuse and “grooming” of children under 16 years of age **to Victoria Police. All VIT registered Principals and teachers are mandated to report these categories of abuse to Victoria Police.** Where the source of abuse is within the family or community, **all VIT registered Principals and teachers are mandated to also report to DHHS Child Protection.**

### Training and Supervision

- Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone’s responsibility.
- We provide training and education to all staff, volunteers, parents/carers and children to ensure we uphold a strong school culture of child safety and to minimise risks of child abuse. We support all community members to feel confident and comfortable in understanding, identifying, discussing and reporting child safety concerns or child abuse matters or allegations.
- 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 and Torres Strait Islander children, children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, children with a disability and vulnerable children.
- New employees receive detailed child safe training as part of our induction processes, to ensure they understand their obligations to report and uphold a safe school environment for all children in our education and care.
- Contractors, volunteers and visitors also receive a thorough induction process, outlining child safe policies and procedures, should their time on school grounds require it.

### Recruitment

- 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.
- We encourage applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.
- All individuals engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a current 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](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) for further information.
- We carry out careful and effective reference checks on prospective employees and volunteers to ensure that we are recruiting appropriate 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 (not the actual criminal record) if an applicant’s criminal history affected our decision-making process.
- If during the recruitment process an individual’s records indicate a criminal history, then they will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

### Fair Procedures for Personnel

- The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. 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 objective.

- We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our 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 children 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 children, 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

Our school acknowledges the Failure to Disclose and Failure to Protect legislative requirements, and our responsibilities are clearly understood by school leadership, staff, volunteers and community members, as outlined below. Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties to report suspected physical abuse, sexual abuse and "grooming" of children under 16 years of age or face criminal prosecution.

- **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.

Further information regarding legal responsibilities can be viewed at:

[www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/betrayal+of+trust+implementation](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/betrayal+of+trust+implementation).

### 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 (for example, any doors that can lock or withdrawal spaces without glass), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).

### Allegations, Concerns and Complaints

- Burwood Heights Primary School and Kindergarten 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 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.
- If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred, then legally they must report the incident.

## Regular Review

- This policy was reviewed March 2018 and will be reviewed every two years, or following significant incidents, should they occur.

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](mailto: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](mailto:licensed.childrens.services@edumail.vic.gov.au)