



# Portland South Primary School

## CHILD SAFE Policy

### Our Commitment to Child Safety

Portland South Primary School is committed to child safety. We want children to feel safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.

We are 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 policies and procedures.

We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously. Our school is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks. Our school has rigorous human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.

Portland South Primary School is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

We have 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.**

### **Purpose Of This Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the strong commitment of Portland South Primary School to the care, safety and wellbeing of all students at our school. It provides an outline of the policies, procedures and strategies developed to keep students safe from harm, including all forms of abuse in our school environment, on campus, online and in other locations provided by the school.

This policy takes into account relevant legislative requirements within the state of Victoria, including the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards as set out in [Ministerial Order No. 870](#).

This policy applies to all school staff, including school employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy.

### **For our children**

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, 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 are supported to participate.

### **Our staff and volunteers**

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation.

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. 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 & Supervision**

Training and education is important to ensure that staff, parents and volunteers at Portland South Primary School understand that child safety is a collective responsibility. 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 all children from abuse; promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, ensure the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds; and ensure the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised and supported regularly through the induction and mentoring process, 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). 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.

As part of their initial induction to the school, staff and volunteers will be informed of child protection reporting requirements and Department policy (<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/childprotection.aspx>) and will be provided with supporting documentation in their staff handbook.

### **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 and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

- We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.
- 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. Please see the Working with Children Check website <[www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au)> for further information
- 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.

#### **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 based on evidence.
- 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.

#### **Implementation:**

- *All mandated staff must successfully complete the DE&T online modules regarding Mandatory Reporting on a yearly basis.*
- *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.*
- *All concerns must be reported immediately to the Principal, or in his/her absence, the teacher in charge. **The Principal must be informed if a report is made in case of further follow up.***
- *New staff and volunteers will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of their induction procedure.*
- *The Principal will keep a record of all discussions about a student with whom there is a concern.*
- *If a belief has been formed by a staff member that sexual or physical abuse has taken place, documentation must be completed and filed in the student confidential files.*

- *The teacher and/or Principal will contact the Department of Health & Human Services as soon as possible to make an official notification on:*

**Phone: 1800 650 227 or After Hours Child Protection Emergency Services 131278, or Child First on 1300 854 944 or SOCAU on 5820 5878.**

- 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 class member or his/her nominee.
- All documentation regarding Child Protection Reporting is to remain filed in the student confidential files.
- All reports, information sheets and subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and remain strictly confidential.
- All incidents to be monitored, and any subsequent signs or indications of abuse are also to be reported.

### **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 organisation 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.<sup>1</sup>
- **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.<sup>2</sup>
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.<sup>3</sup>

### **Risk Management**

- 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.
- 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 (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).

### **Allegations, Concerns and Complaints**

- 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.
- 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 (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.

### **Child Safety Officer**

Vicki Fisher

Principal

School Phone: 55232911

1 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

<[www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence)>.

2 Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website

<[www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence)>.

3 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.

4 For example behaviour, please see **An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards:**

<[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/\\_\\_\\_data/assets/word\\_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards\\_overview.doc](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/___data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc)>

See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about how to make a report to child protection <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first)>.

**Evaluation:**

This policy will be reviewed in 2023.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in September, 2019

## Child Safe Standards

### The basics: what do I need to do for each Standard?

#### Principle of inclusion

##### ACTIONS

The **school** takes account of and makes reasonable efforts to accommodate the diversity of all children in implementing the Child Safe Standards

##### **Examples of how to demonstrate 'reasonable efforts' may include:**

- Significant cultural events such as NAIDOC week are noted and/or celebrated
- Training for school staff on supporting diverse families
- Child safety information sessions to students and families from diverse backgrounds
- School leadership takes account of diversity when making decisions regarding the Child Safe Standards

The [Child Safety Policy](#) refers to the diversity of all children, and specifically mentions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable.

##### FURTHER GUIDANCE

- Page 4, [School Review: Information Resources for Schools, Regions and Reviewers](#)

##### MY SCHOOL'S ACTIONS

### Child Safe Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety

#### ACTIONS

- The **school** develops, and the **Principal** approves strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety
- The **school** (and **school council** where relevant) implements the strategies and informs the school community of them
- The school's strategies are included in its **[Child Safety Policy](#)**.

#### Examples of strategies may include:

- Child safety is a regular agenda item at staff meetings and/or school council meetings
- Child safety is discussed in class, year level assemblies, or in school newsletters
- Staff have been allocated specific child safety-related roles and responsibilities
- The school has an action plan to address any identified gaps or areas for improvement.

#### FURTHER GUIDANCE

- [Strategies to embed a culture of child safety](#)
- [PROTECT poster](#)
- Page 6, [School Review: Information Resources for Schools, Regions and Reviewers](#)

#### MY SCHOOL'S ACTIONS

### Child Safe Standard 2: A child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety

#### ACTIONS

- The **school** develops, and the **Principal** approves the **[Child Safety Policy](#)**.
- The **Child Safety Policy** is made publicly available

#### Examples of how to make the Policy publicly available may include:

- publishing on the school's website
- school newsletters
- public display on school grounds.

#### FURTHER GUIDANCE

- [Developing a child safety policy](#) and [Preparing a child safety policy](#)
- Page 7, [School Review: Information Resources for Schools, Regions and Reviewers](#)

#### MY SCHOOL'S ACTIONS



### Child Safe Standard 3: A child safety code of conduct

#### ACTIONS

- The **school** develops, and the **Principal** approves a [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#)
- The **school council** approves the Code of Conduct (to the extent it applies to school council employees and members, unless delegated to the Principal)
- The **Code of Conduct** is made publicly available

#### Examples of how to make the Code publicly available may include:

- publishing on the school's website
- school newsletters
- public display on school grounds.

#### FURTHER GUIDANCE

- [Developing a Child Safety Code of Conduct](#)
- Page 9, [School Review: Information Resources for Schools, Regions and Reviewers](#)

#### MY SCHOOL'S ACTIONS

**Child Safe Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse**

**ACTIONS**

- The **Principal** ensures the school follows the [Recruitment in Schools Guide](#) to ensure the school's hiring practices are child safe
- School councils** (for school council employees, unless delegated to the Principal) ensure that selection, supervision and management practices are child safe, including:
  - o Ensure that jobs involving child-connected work have a statement setting out the job's requirements and duties regarding child safety
  - o Inform applicants for jobs involving child-connected work about the school's child safety practices (including the Code of Conduct)
  - o Complete suitability checks for the preferred candidate
  - o Ensure that appropriate supervision and support arrangements are in place
- The **school** follows their [Volunteers policy](#)
- The **Child Safety Policy** refers to the school's recruitment, supervision and management practices in place to protect children.

**FURTHER GUIDANCE**

- [HR Practices for a child safe environment](#)

**MY SCHOOL'S ACTIONS**

Child Safe Standard 5: Procedures for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

**ACTIONS**

- The **school** develops, and the **Principal** approves a [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations \(including Mandatory Reporting\) policy and procedures](#)
- The [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations \(including Mandatory Reporting\) policy and procedures](#) are made publicly available and accessible

**Examples of how to make the policy publicly available may include:**

- publishing on the school's website
- school newsletters
- public display of the [Four Critical Actions](#) on school grounds.

**FURTHER GUIDANCE**

- [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#) [[accessible](#)]
- Page 9, [School Review: Information Resources for Schools, Regions and Reviewers](#)

**MY SCHOOL'S ACTIONS**

**Child Safe Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse**

**ACTIONS**

□ The **school** develops, implements, records, and monitors risk management strategies, for example by using a [Child Safety Risk Assessment Register](#), approved by the **Principal**

**Examples of monitoring the effectiveness of the risk management strategies may include:**

- The **Principal or another staff member** reviews the Child Safety Risk Assessment Register (or other document) annually to make sure it is effective, up to date and reflects any changes in the school's environment (e.g. a particular reporting process has changed, a new campus has opened, the Principal has been notified of a risk related to a school council activity, etc.)

□ **At least annually**, the **school council** undertakes appropriate [guidance and training about child safety](#)

□ **At least annually**, the **Principal** ensures appropriate guidance and training about child safety is provided to school staff

**Examples of this training may include:**

- Staff complete the online module [Protecting Children: Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations](#)
- Staff watch the Commission for Children and Young People's video on [Creating a Child Safe Organisation](#)
- Staff review of [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#) [[accessible](#)]
- Other appropriate child safety guidance and training, undertaken annually.

**FURTHER GUIDANCE**

- [Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse](#)
- Page 10, [School Review: Information Resources for Schools, Regions and Reviewers](#)

**MY SCHOOL'S ACTIONS**

Child Safe Standard 7: Strategies to promote child participation and empowerment

**ACTIONS**

□ The **school** develops, and the **Principal** approves, strategies to deliver appropriate education about:

- Standards of behaviour for students attending the school
- Healthy and respectful relationships
- Resilience; and
- Child abuse awareness and prevention.

□ The **school** promotes the Child Safe Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children

**Examples of promoting the Child Safe Standards may include:**

- [PROTECT poster](#) is displayed in the school
- All Child Safe Standards documents are publicly available
- Children have access to some child safety materials designed for them (e.g. worksheets, posters)
- Students make and display their own child safety posters
- Child safety-related discussions are held at circle time in class.

**FURTHER GUIDANCE**

- [A guide to support Victorian Schools to meet Child Safe Standard 7 \[accessible\]](#)
- Page 12, [School Review: Information Resources for Schools, Regions and Reviewers](#)

**MY SCHOOL'S ACTIONS**