

# SURFSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL

## CHILD SAFE POLICY



### 1. PURPOSE

This policy details the school's commitment and procedures that are to be followed by all staff and volunteers to ensure we are creating and maintaining a child safe organisation where all students are safe and feel safe and protected. This policy provides a framework for the school's approach to the Child safety standards and is to be read in conjunction with the Surfside Primary School's Statement of Commitment to Child Safety, the school's Statement of Values and the school's Code of Conduct.

### 2. BACKGROUND.

Surfside Primary School is fully committed to protecting the safety of children and is compliant with the Child Safety Standards. Our school supports and respects all children, staff and volunteers. We take a zero tolerance approach to all forms of child abuse. We are fully committed to preventing child abuse, identifying risks early, and will take every reasonable action to eliminate the risk of child abuse. Any allegations, safety concerns or suspected child abuse will be responded to promptly and in line with our organisational policies and procedures.

### 3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, and contractors regardless of whether or not they work in direct contact with our students. It applies across a range of school environments and forums, including camps, outside of school hour's programs and online forums.

### 4. DEFINITIONS

*Child abuse* includes:

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

*Child-connected* work means work authorised by the school, school council, or Secretary of the Department of Education and Training and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

*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.

*Grooming* is when a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time. Grooming can include communicating and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent/carer.

*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 campus of the school
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

*School governing authority* means, in the case of a government school:

- the Secretary; or **PROTECT** | The Department of Education and Training | ©2016
- a school council, as authorised by or under the **Education and Training Reform Act 2006**; or
- the principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school or under the **Education and Training Reform Act 2006**.

*School staff* being an individual working in a school environment who is:

- directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority;
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary), and including a chaplain or minister of religion.

## 5. IMPLEMENTATION

All child safety documents, including this policy, the Staff and Volunteers Child Safety Code of Conduct, Our Statement of Commitment to Child safety, the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#) and the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) are readily available on our staff Google Drive and in hard copy at the school's office. Child safety is everyone's responsibility.

### 5.1 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.
- **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.**
- **Grooming offence-** A grooming offence is now in effect to target individuals who communicate with a child or their parents with the intent of committing child sexual abuse.

### 5.2 Child safety principles

In its planning, decision-making and operations, Surfside School will:

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;

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2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
7. Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such concerns;
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers

### **5.3 Roles and responsibilities**

School leaders will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct, which sets out clearly the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Specific child safety responsibilities:

- The Assistant Principal is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy every 3 years.
- The Principal is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy. The school community should approach the Principal if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy.
- The Principal is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available.
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in Surfside School's other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and risk assessment register

### **5.4 Training and Supervision**

- Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.
- We aim 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 will provide professional learning opportunities and train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

- We support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse, promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from linguistically and/or culturally diverse backgrounds, and promote the safety of children with a disability and vulnerable children.
- Child safety and student wellbeing is an ongoing item of agenda at all staff meetings.
- New employees and volunteers will be inducted into the school, including by being referred to the Child Safety Policy (this document), the Staff and Volunteers Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures on the school website. They will also be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school's commitment to child safety, and that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.
- New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and the collective responsibility for the protection of children, as well as evaluating that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate and in keeping with the school's Code of Conduct.
- Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through the correct channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

### **5.5 Recruitment of Staff**

- 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.
- The Surfside staff selection checklist will be used for all applicants shortlisted for interview.
- 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.
- 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 affects 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.
- All allegations directed at staff will be taken seriously and addressed in accordance with the school's policy and procedures.

### **5.6 Listening to, communicating with and empowering children**

Surfside School has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/carers. We encourage child and parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/carers to understand their rights and their responsibilities. Our school is committed to supporting and encouraging students to use their voice to raise and share their concerns with a trusted adult at any time of need. Students can access information on how to report abuse at [insert place, e.g. school reception, and/or link].

When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct with or abuse of a child, the school will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (and/or their parents/carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

- The welfare and wellbeing of students at Surfside Primary School is paramount. Staff will be vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes are in place.
- Students disclosing information will be listened to respectfully and all concerns treated seriously. An appropriate response or course of action will be followed in all cases.

The school will promote the Child Safe Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children, including:

- All of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for the students and parents at Surfside School to read on our website.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school
- School newsletters will inform students and the school community about the school's commitment to child safety, and strategies or initiatives that the school is taking to ensure student safety.
- The Leadership team will be responsible for monitoring and auditing the curriculum to ensure children are equipped with information, resources and understanding about child safety, child abuse and preventative strategies and that this is delivered in a manner appropriate to the child's age and stage of life.
- age-appropriate discussion of child safety with students, The school will use its health and wellbeing programs such as Respectful Relationships, sexuality education, Child-Wise, e-smart education programs to deliver appropriate education to its students about:

- o standards of behaviour for students attending the school;
- o healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality);
- o resilience; and
- o child abuse awareness and prevention.

### **5.7 Reporting a child safety concern or complaint**

The school has clear expectations for all Staff and Volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. All staff (including school council employees) must follow the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) if there is an incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse. Immediate actions should include reporting their concerns to DHHS Child Protection, Victoria Police and/or another appropriate agency and notifying the principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns.

Surfside School will never prohibit or discourage school staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse. The school will always take action to respond to a complaint in accordance with the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures. In accordance with Action 4 of the Four Critical Actions for Schools, Surfside School will provide ongoing support for students affected by child abuse.

### **5.8 Risk reduction and management**

Surfside School believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes, found in the school's risk assessment register. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.

We will identify and mitigate the risks of child abuse in school environments by taking into account the nature of each school environment, the activities expected to be conducted in that environment and the characteristics and needs of all children expected to be present in that environment.

Surfside School monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the actions it takes to reduce or remove risks to child safety, more information can be found in the school's risk assessment register [or other document].

### **5.9 Communication**

This school is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- Ensuring that the Child Safety Policy (this document), Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure are available on the school website
- Once per term reminders in the school newsletter of our school's commitment to child safety
- Ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings and staff meetings for discussion
- Providing copies of policies to new families upon enrolment

### **Confidentiality and Privacy**

Surfside Primary school collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law and other relevant laws. The principles

regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the Department of Education and Training's [Schools' Privacy Policy](#).

## 6 RESOURCES

### 6.1 Links to Detailed Information

- Victorian Registrations and Qualifications Authority Child Safe Standards
  - <http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes/Pages/default.html>
- Protect portal, Department of Employment and Training
  - <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/default.aspx?Redirect=1>
- Child Safe Standards  
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/chilsafestandards.aspx>

### 6.2 Related policies

- Statement of Commitment to Child Safety
- Staff and Volunteers Child Safety Code of conduct
- Statement of Values
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy
- Student Wellbeing Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Equal Opportunity Policy
- Complaints and Concerns policy
- Responding to Allegations of Abuse Policy

The Child Safe Policy and all other associated policies will be monitored and reviewed annually.

**This policy is reviewed, updated and agreed to by School Council annually.**