

CHILD SAFETY POLICY



1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The child safe environment policy sets out the school's approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people feel safe; and provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1. This policy applies to all school staff, teachers; DET employees, volunteers and Casual Relief Teachers (CRT's). It also applies to any contractors on site whether or not they are in direct contact with any children.
- 2.2. This policy also applies across a range of forums (for example camps; excursions; in an online environment in school hours and when registered in our Out of School Hours care (OOSHC) program.
- 2.3. Any community organisations that we will partner with will be made aware of this policy and the school's underlying philosophy towards the care of children.

3. STATE OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

- 3.1. Armadale Primary School is committed to creating a child safe environment
- 3.2. All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse.
- 3.3. We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
- 3.4. We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
- 3.5. 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.
- 3.6. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- 3.7. Armadale Primary School is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- 3.8. Armadale Primary School has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- 3.9. Armadale Primary School is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks and all staff undertake Mandatory Reporting Training.
- 3.10. 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 a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.
- 3.11. We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

3.12. The Principal, Assistant Principal and the Leadership team are responsible for leading the development of a culture of child safety and are the first point of call for concerns regarding student safety at Armadale Primary School.

3.13. If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

4. POLICY AND PROCEDURES

- 4.1. Armadale Primary School has a number of policies and procedures that focus on the wellbeing and safety of our children, such as our STUDENT ENGAGEMENT POLICY. These policies are reviewed regularly in consultation with our school community and are available on our school website.
- 4.2. We encourage all members of our community to be familiar with our policies and to know who to contact or where to go if they are at all concerned. Do not hesitate to speak to your child's teacher or any of the school's leadership team. Our school follows the DET's policy and procedures for identifying, responding to and reporting child abuse.
- 4.3. We have made the  [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#) guide available to all our staff and school community.
- 4.4. This is also available on the <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/protect> website.
- 4.5. Our staff have also been trained in the elearning modules on mandatory reporting <http://www.elearn.com.au/det/protectingchildren/schools/>
- 4.6. There are also fact sheets for parents and carers, primary students and staff for identifying and responding to child abuse. To align with the principle of diversity and inclusiveness which underpin these Standards, these fact sheets are available from the <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/protect> website in 14 community languages.

5. A CHILD-SAFE CULTURE

- 5.1. At Armadale Primary School we have developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children and their parents/ carers. This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants at Armadale Primary School. 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.
- 5.2. The school's culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns, making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.
- 5.3. We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:
- 5.4. promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- 5.5. promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- 5.6. ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

6. HUMAN RESOURCES : OUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

- 6.1. This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation. School leaders and managers will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect.
- 6.2. 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. The school's Code of Conduct

sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

7. TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

- 7.1. Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.
- 7.2. 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.
- 7.3. 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.
- 7.4. New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand Armadale Primary School'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.

8. RECRUITMENT

- 8.1. 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. Armadale Primary School understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.
- 8.2. We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.
- 8.3. 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 for further information.
- 8.4. All prospective staff and volunteers are required to undergo National Criminal History Records 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 affected our decision making process.
- 8.5. 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.

9. FAIR PROCEDURES FOR PERSONNEL

- 9.1. 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.

- 9.2. We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.
- 9.3. 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.

10. REPORTING A CHILD SAFETY CONCERN OR COMPLAINT

- 10.1. Armadale Primary School 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.
- 10.2. 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.
- 10.3. 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).
- 10.4. 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:
 - 10.5. a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
 - 10.6. behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed¹
 - 10.7. someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
 - 10.8. observing suspicious behaviour.
- 10.9. The school has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. Immediate action should include reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection 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. The school will take action to respond to a complaint.
- 10.10. The school will then follow the procedures for reporting a child safety concern or complaint at http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/ChildSafeStandard5_SchoolsGuide.pdf
- 10.11. All registered teachers undertake annual Mandatory Reporting DE&T Professional Development Online Learning modules and Assessment

11. LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

- 11.1. Armadale Primary School takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:
 - 11.2. **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.²

¹ For example behaviour, please see [An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc): <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc>

² 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](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence) <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>.

11.3. **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.³

11.4. Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.⁴

12. RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT

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

12.2. 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.

12.3. 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).

13. LISTENING TO CHILDREN

13.1. Armadale Primary 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. 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 of things and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (or their parents/carers) informed about progress.

14. PRIVACY

14.1. This school collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law. The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the School Privacy Policy. 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.

15. POLICY EVALUATION AND REVIEW

15.1. To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework. This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible

³ Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offences) <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offences>.

⁴ 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](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) <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first>.

we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

16. DEFINITIONS

- 16.1. **Child** means a person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.
- 16.2. **Child protection** means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.
- 16.3. **Child abuse** means all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial (e.g. for financial gain) or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a child.
- 16.4. **Child sexual assault is** any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.
- 16.5. **Reasonable grounds for belief** is a belief based on reasonable grounds that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively assessed. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator. A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:
- 16.5.1. The child is in need of protection,
- 16.5.2. The child has suffered or is likely to suffer "significant harm as a result of physical injury",
- 16.5.3. The parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.
- A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.
- A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed if:
- 16.5.4. A child states that they have been physically or sexually abused;
- 16.5.5. A child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);
- 16.5.6. Someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused;
- 16.5.7. Professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused; and/or
- 16.5.8. Signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

16.6. Related policies and documents

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/dutyofcare.aspx>

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/childprotection.aspx>

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/health/Pages/default.aspx>

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/governance/pages/privacy.aspx>

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated on May 2019 and is scheduled for review on May 2021