

Park Ridge Primary School Child Safety Policy August 2025

Rationale

On 26 November 2015, the Victorian Parliament passed the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015 to introduce child safe standards into law. The standards commenced on 01 January 2016 for most organisations working with children, with the aim of promoting cultural change in the way organisations manage the risk of child abuse and neglect.

Purpose

The Park Ridge Primary School Child Safety Policy demonstrates our school's commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe. This policy provides an overview of our school's approach to implementing [Ministerial Order 1359](#) (PDF) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

It informs our school community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

Scope

This policy:

- applies to all school staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to school council members where indicated.
- applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided by for a student's use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers
- should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related school policies section below.
-

Definitions

Child abuse

Child abuse includes any act committed against a child involving:

- a sexual offence or grooming; and
- the infliction on a child of physical violence, or serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- serious neglect of a child (including medical neglect).

Child-connected work

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

Child safety

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.

School environment

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

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

School staff

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

- employed by the Department of Education
- directly engaged or employed by a school council, or
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary).

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY AND CHILD SAFETY PRINCIPLES

PRPS is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our school environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our school has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing, and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

The school's approach to creating and maintaining a child safe school environment is guided by our school philosophy and values. PRPS is committed to preparing our students to develop the knowledge and skills that will help them become life-long learners who are successful and happy individuals who participate fully in, and contribute to our community and the world around us.

The values at PRPS guide the decisions and behaviours of all members of our school community, including in relation to child safety:

Respect – *accept, value and appreciate others and our differences and treat others the way you would like to be treated.*

Resilience – *being able to control your emotions, overcome challenges and believe in your ability to achieve.*

Positivity – *developing a growth mindset, being grateful and putting your best effort into everything you do.*

Integrity – *always do the right thing, own your mistakes, be honest and make good choices.*

High Expectations – *encouraging and supporting all members of our school community to strive for excellence.*

Every person involved at PRPS has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

Child safety principles

In its planning, decision-making and operations, PRPS will:

- take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
- value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
- foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
- respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
- provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
- engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
- 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;
- report suspected abuse, neglect, or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
- share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
- value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

Strategies to embed a child safe culture

The culture at PRPS encourages staff, students, parents and the school community to raise, discuss and scrutinise child safety concerns. This makes it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

All child safety documents, including this policy, the Child Safety Code of Conduct (Appendix 1), the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures (Appendix 2), [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#) and the [Four Critical Actions](#) are readily available online and in hard copy in the Assistant Principal (Wellbeing)'s office for all staff and students to read at any time.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As part of the child safe culture at PRPS, our **school leadership** team (including the Principal and Assistant Principals) is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

Principals and Assistant Principals will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed;
- model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing;
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered;
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students;
- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the school community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings;
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of responding to abuse;

- create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school or the Department of Education, and always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures;
- act in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct;
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#);
- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives; and
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

As part of the child safe culture at PRPS, in performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, **school council and school council members** will:

- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings;
- champion and promote a child safe culture;
- consider the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable, when making decisions regarding the Child Safe Standards;
- undertake annual guidance and training on child safety, such as the [Child Safe Standards School Council Training PowerPoint](#);
- approve the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members, and if updated, note the new document in its school council meeting minutes;
- when hiring employees, ensure that selection, supervision and management practices are child safe (unless delegated to the principal. School leadership will maintain records of the above processes.

Specific staff child safety 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 (Curriculum) is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy annually.
- The Principal and Assistant Principals are 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 and Assistant Principals are responsible for informing the school community about this policy and making it publicly available.
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in 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 the Child Safety Risk Assessment Register.
- Our Principal and Assistant Principal (Wellbeing) are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.
- Assistant Principal (Wellbeing) is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy. Anyone in our school community should approach the Assistant Principal (Wellbeing) if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy.
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in 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 Child Safety Risk Register.
- Our school has also established a Child Safety and Wellbeing Team and a Student Reference Group on child safety. The Child Safety and Wellbeing Team meets regularly to identify and respond to any

ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing. The Student Reference Group provides an opportunity for students to provide input into school strategies.

Child Safety Code of Conduct

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments. We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing

At our school we identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site overnight camps, adventure activities and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our school leadership team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

Establishing a culturally safe environment

At PRPS, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

We have developed the following strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community:

- Staff undertaking Cultural Understanding and Safety Training (CUST).
- Students identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander to have a regularly reviewed Individual Learning Plan.
- Promoting an awareness of Aboriginal culture through Curriculum-linked activities and school events.

Student Empowerment

PRPS 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 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. Students can access information on how to report abuse at the school office.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the school to ensure a sense of belonging through our Berry Street Education Model (BSEM) activities, implementing our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships, our expectations on student behaviour and our school values.

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 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 PRPS to read at <https://parkridge-ps.vic.edu.au/>,
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed in the school office,

- school newsletters will inform the school community about the school's commitment to child safety, strategies or initiatives that the school is taking to ensure student safety and when documents have been revised and updated,
- school staff engage in age-appropriate discussions about child safety with students,
- students create their own child safety posters during the whole school Day for Daniel event,
- the Four Critical Actions are actively taught to mandatory reporters and other school staff,
- the Child Safe Standards are addressed at parent information sessions.

The school will use the Berry Street Education Model, Cyber Safety Project resources and the Respectful Relationships program to deliver appropriate education to its students about:

- standards of behaviour for students attending the school,
- healthy and respectful relationships,
- resilience, and
- child abuse awareness and prevention.

Communications and Family Engagement

Our families and the school community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, at PRPS we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

PRPS 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 <https://parkridge-ps.vic.edu.au/>,
- 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,
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school.

Diversity and equity

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal children and young people,
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds,
- children and young people with disabilities,
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence,
- international students,
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

Suitable Staff and Volunteers

At PRPS, we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

Staff recruitment

When recruiting staff, we follow the Department of Education's recruitment policies and guidelines, available on the Policy and Advisory Library (PAL) at:

- Recruitment in Schools
- Suitability for Employment Checks
- School Council Employment
- Contractor OHS Management.

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching registration
- collect and record:
 - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
 - the person's history of working with children
 - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

Staff induction

All newly appointed staff will be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program will include a focus on:

- the Child Safety Policy (this document)
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

Ongoing supervision and management of staff

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

Staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. This will be done by our regular Performance and Development Plans and reviews.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our school and department policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

Suitability of volunteers

All volunteers are required to comply with our Volunteers Policy, which describes how we assess the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing induction and training, and supervision and management.

Child safety knowledge, skills and awareness

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our staff will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- our school's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices;
- completing the Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations online module annually;
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students;
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm;
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students;
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations;
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment.

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing, for example, training for our volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

School council training and education

To ensure our school council is equipped with the knowledge required to make decisions in the best interests of student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment, the council is trained at least annually. Training includes guidance on:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse,
- child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment.

Complaints and reporting processes

PRPS fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the Code of Conduct, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our school's Complaint Policy.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including school council employees and homestay providers) must follow our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures. Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school.

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, we will ensure our school follows:

- the Four Critical Actions for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child,
- the Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending.

Our Student Wellbeing and Engagement and Bullying Prevention Policy cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

Confidentiality and privacy

This 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 are included in the Department of Education's [Schools' Privacy Policy](#).

Records management

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the Department of Education's policy: Records Management – School Records.

Review of child safety practices

At PRPS we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

- review and improve our policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident;
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice;
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community.

Related policies and documents

Related policies and documents include:

- Code of Conduct (Appendix 1)
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures (Appendix 2)
- Risk assessment register

- [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- [Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools](#)
- [Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Duty of Care: Policy](#)
- [Protecting Children – Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#)
- [Schools' Privacy Policy.](#)
- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Digital Learning Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Visitors Policy
- Volunteers Policy

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's annual review cycle.

Policy:	Child Safety Policy		
Date Approved:	August, 2025	Approved By:	Principal
		In Consultation with:	Education Committee Sub
Date for Review:	August, 2026	Date Updated on Policy Index:	August, 2025

Appendix 1 Park Ridge Primary School Code of Conduct Policy August, 2025

Rationale

Park Ridge Primary School (PRPS) has a strong commitment to child safety. We believe that each child has the right to feel happy, safe and valued. We continually strive to ensure that every child is safe from harm including all forms of abuse and therefore we have a zero tolerance to abuse.

Aim

- To promote child safety in the school environment.
- To set standards about the ways in which school staff are expected to behave with students.
- To take into account the interests of school staff (including other professional or occupational codes of conduct that regulate particular school staff such as registered teachers) and the needs of all students.
- To be consistent with the school's child safety strategies, policies and procedures as revised from time to time.

Implementation

- This policy should be read in conjunction with a school's child safety strategies, policies and procedures.
- This advice does not replace any legislative or regulatory obligations or other professional or occupational codes of conduct that regulate particular staff at the school, in particular the *Victorian Public Sector Commission Code of Conduct*.
- This policy is supported by the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) *Victorian Teaching Profession Codes of Conduct and Ethics* that provides clarity regarding professional behaviour expected of teachers at all times. The code specifies behaviour unacceptable for a professional relationship between a teacher and a student. The VIT code provides a useful guide to appropriate behaviour for all school staff.
- Principles that guide an adult's behaviour when undertaking child-connected work:
 - o the adult/child relationship should be professional at all times,
 - o an adult's response to a child's behaviour or circumstance should be commensurate with the child's age and vulnerability and the adult's responsibility for the care, safety and welfare of the child, and
 - o an adult should not be alone with a child unless it is in accordance with their roles and responsibilities.

Professional Conduct

- Relationships with students:
 - o Teachers provide opportunities for all students to learn.
 - o Teachers treat their students with courtesy and dignity.
 - o Teachers work within the limits of their professional expertise.
 - o Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with students.
 - o Teachers are always in a professional relationship with the students, whether at school or not.
- Relationships with parents/carers, families and communities:
 - o Teachers maintain a professional relationship with parents/carers.
 - o Teachers work in collaborative relationships with students' families and communities.
- Relationships with colleagues:
 - o Collegiality is an integral part of the work of teachers.

- Acceptable behaviours - All staff, volunteers and parents are responsible for supporting the safety of students by:
 - o adhering to the school's Child Safe Policy and upholding the school's statement of commitment to child safety at all times;
 - o taking all reasonable steps to protect students from abuse;
 - o treating everyone in the school community with respect;
 - o listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child;
 - o promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child's self-identification);
 - o promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance for discrimination);
 - o promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability (for example, during personal care activities);
 - o ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not alone with a child except in accordance with their roles and responsibilities;
 - o reporting any allegations of child abuse to the school's leadership (or Assistant Principal (Wellbeing));
 - o understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to mandatory reporting and reporting under the *Crimes Act 1958*;
 - o reporting any child safety concerns to the school's leadership;
 - o if an allegation of child abuse is made, the school will follow appropriate school policies and protocols.
- Unacceptable behaviours - Staff and volunteers must not:
 - o ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse;
 - o develop any 'special' relationships with students that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific students);
 - o exhibit behaviours with students, which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps);
 - o put students at risk of abuse;
 - o initiate unnecessary physical contact with students or do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes;
 - o use inappropriate language in the presence of students;
 - o express personal discriminatory views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of students;
 - o discriminate against any child, including but not limited to age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability;
 - o have contact with a child or their family that is inconsistent with school policies and procedures (for example, *Child Safety Policy* or *Digital Technologies - Internet, Social Media and Digital Devices Policy*);
 - o have personal online contact with a child (including by social media, personal email, instant messaging etc.) unless school related;
 - o exchange personal contact details with a child, such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses;
 - o photograph or video a child without the consent of the parent or guardians;
 - o upload photos onto social media without the consent of parents or guardians;
 - o work with students whilst under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.

Personal Conduct

- The personal conduct of a teacher will have an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and the profession as a whole.

Professional Competence

- Teachers value their professionalism, and set and maintain high standards of competence
- Teachers are aware of the legal requirements that pertain to their profession. In particular, they are cognisant of their legal responsibilities.



Appendix 2

Park Ridge Primary School

Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures

August 2025

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all staff and members of our school community understand the various legal and other reporting obligations related to child safety that apply to Park Ridge Primary School. The specific procedures that are applicable at our school are contained at Appendix A.

Scope

This policy applies to all school staff, volunteers and school community members. It also applies to all staff and students engaged in any school and school council-run events, activities and services including the school's Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) program.

Policy

All children and young people have the right to protection in their best interests.

Park Ridge Primary School understands the important role our school plays in protecting children from abuse including:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse (including sexual exploitation)
- Family violence
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect (including medical neglect)
- Grooming

The staff at Park Ridge Primary School are required by law to comply with various child safety reporting obligations. For detailed information about each obligation, please refer to [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#).

At Park Ridge Primary School we also recognise the diversity of the children and young people at our school and take account of their individual needs and backgrounds when considering child safety.

Mandatory Reporting

The following individuals are mandatory reporters under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic):

- Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registered teachers, including principals
- School staff who have been granted permission to teach by the VIT
- registered medical practitioners and nurses
- registered psychologists
- all members of the police force
- People in religious ministry

- Staff who provide direct support to students for mental, emotional or psychological wellbeing, including (but not limited to) school health and wellbeing staff, primary welfare coordinators, student wellbeing coordinators, mental health practitioners, chaplains, and Student Support Services staff

All mandatory reporters must make a report to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection as soon as practicable if, during the course of carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities, they form a belief on reasonable grounds that:

- a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical abuse and/ or sexual abuse, and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.

A mandatory reporter who fails to comply with this legal obligation may be committing a criminal offence. It is important for all staff at Park Ridge Primary School to be aware that they are legally obliged to make a mandatory report on each occasion that they form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection and they must make a mandatory report even if the Principal does not share their belief that a report is necessary.

At our school, all mandated school staff must undertake the *Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations eLearning Module* annually. We also require all other staff to undertake this module, even where they are not mandatory reporters.

For more information about Mandatory Reporting see the Department of Education's *School Policy and Advisory Guide*: [Protecting Children – Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#)

Child in Need of Protection

Any person can make a report to DFFH Child Protection (131 278 – 24-hour service) if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection.

The policy of the Department of Education requires **all staff** who form a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection to report their concerns to DFFH or Victoria Police, and discuss their concerns with the school leadership team.

For more information about making a report to DFFH Child Protection, see the Department's *School Policy and Advisory Guide*: [Protecting Children – Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#):

At Park Ridge Primary School we also encourage all staff to make a referral to Child FIRST when they have significant concern for a child's wellbeing. For more information about making a referral to Child FIRST see the School Policy and Advisory Guide [Protecting Children – Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#):

Reportable Conduct

Our school must notify the Department of Education's Employee Conduct Branch (7022 0005) if we become aware of an allegation of 'reportable conduct'.

There is an allegation of reportable conduct where a person has formed a reasonable belief that there has been:

- a sexual offence (even prior to criminal proceedings commencing), sexual misconduct or physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child;
- behaviour causing significant emotional or physical harm to a child;
- significant neglect of a child; or
- misconduct involving any of the above.

The Department of Education, through the Employee Conduct Branch, has a legal obligation to inform the Commission for Children and Young People when an allegation of reportable conduct is made.

Our Principal must notify the Department of Education's Employee Conduct Branch of any reportable conduct allegations involving current or former teachers, contractors, volunteers (including parents), allied health staff and school council employees.

If school staff become aware of reportable conduct by any person in the above positions, they should notify the Principal immediately. If the allegation relates to the Principal, they should notify the Regional Director.

For more information about Reportable Conduct see the Department's *School Policy and Advisory Guide: Reportable and Notifiable Conduct*.

Failure to Disclose Offence

Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults (e.g. persons aged 18 years and over), not just professionals who work with children, have a legal obligation to report to Victoria Police, as soon as practicable, where they form a 'reasonable belief' that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16 by another person aged 18 years or over.

Failure to disclose information to Victoria Police (by calling 000 or local police station) as soon as practicable may amount to a criminal offence unless a person has a 'reasonable excuse' or exemption from doing so.

'Reasonable belief' is not the same as having proof. 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 when:

- a child states that they have been sexually abused,
- a child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves),
- someone who knows a child states that the child has been sexually abused,
- professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a mandated professional to form a belief that the child has been sexually abused,
- signs of sexual abuse leads to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.

'Reasonable excuse' is defined by law and includes:

fear for the safety of any person including yourself or the potential victim (but not including the alleged perpetrator or an organisation)
where the information has already been disclosed, for example, through a mandatory report to DFFH Child Protection.

Failure to Protect Offence

This reporting obligation applies to school staff in a position of authority. This can include Principals, Assistant Principals and Campus Principals. Any staff member in a position of authority who becomes aware that an adult associated with their school (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the age of 16 under their care, authority or supervision, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk.

This may include removing the adult (i.e. persons aged 18 years and over) from working with children pending an investigation and reporting your concerns to Victoria Police.

If a school staff member in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence.

Grooming

Grooming is a criminal offence under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic). This offence targets predatory conduct undertaken by an adult to prepare a child, under the age of 16, to engage in 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.

For more information about this offence and reporting obligations see: [Child Exploitation and Grooming](#).

Related Policies

School Policies:

- *Child Safety Policy*
- *Statement of Commitment to Child Safety* (included in *Child Safety Policy*)



Appendix A: Child Safety Reporting Procedures at Park Ridge Primary School

For Students

All students should feel safe to speak to any staff member to raise any concerns about their safety or any other concerns that they have.

If a student does not know who to approach at Park Ridge Primary School, they should start with their classroom teacher or the school's Assistant Principal (Wellbeing).

Documented information is provided for and can be accessed by students via the school's *Child Safety Policy*, accessible on the school's website.

Managing Disclosures Made by Students

When managing a disclosure, you should:

- listen to the student and allow them to speak;
- stay calm and use a neutral tone with no urgency and where possible use the child's language and vocabulary (you do not want to frighten the child or interrupt the child);
- be gentle, patient and non-judgmental throughout;
- highlight to the student it was important for them to tell you about what has happened;
- assure them that they are not to blame for what has occurred;
- do not ask leading questions, for example gently ask, "What happened next?" rather than "Why?";
- be patient and allow the child to talk at their own pace and in their own words;
- do not pressure the child into telling you more than they want to, they will be asked a lot of questions by other professionals and it is important not to force them to retell what has occurred multiple times;
- reassure the child that you believe them and that disclosing the matter was important for them to do;
- use verbal facilitators such as, "I see", restate the child's previous statement, and use non-suggestive words of encouragement, designed to keep the child talking in an open-ended way ("what happened next?");
- tell the child in age appropriate language you are required to report to the relevant authority to help stop the abuse, and explain the role of these authorities if appropriate (for a young child this may be as simple as saying "I will need to talk to people to work out what to do next to help you").

When managing a disclosure, you should AVOID:

- displaying expressions of panic or shock;
- asking questions that are investigative and potentially invasive (this may make the child feel uncomfortable and may cause the child to withdraw);
- going over the information repeatedly (you are only gathering information to help you form a belief on reasonable grounds that you need to make a report to the relevant authority);
- making any comments that would lead the student to believe that what has happened is their fault;
- making promises to the child about what will occur next or that things will be different given the process can be unpredictable and different for each child depending on their circumstances (instead reassure them that you and others will do your best to help).

General procedures

Our school will follow the Four Critical Actions - <https://www.schools.vic.gov.au/report-child-abuse-schools#four-critical-actions>

(Four Critical Actions) when responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse.

All staff at our school who believe that a child is in need of protection, even if it doesn't meet the threshold required for mandatory reporting or the staff member is not a mandatory reporter, should in the first instance,

speak to the Assistant Principal (Wellbeing) or should make the required reports to DFFH Child Protection and/or Victoria Police as necessary.

At our school, the Assistant Principal (Wellbeing) will be responsible for monitoring overall school compliance with this procedure.

Nothing in this procedure prevents a staff member or any other person from reporting to the relevant authorities if they form a reasonable belief that a child is at risk of abuse.

Reporting Suspicions, Disclosures or Incidents of Child Abuse

Responsibilities of all school staff

If a school staff member reasonably suspects or witnesses an incident of child abuse or receives a disclosure of child abuse, they must:

- If a child is at immediate risk of harm, separate alleged victims and others involved, administer first aid and call 000.
- Speak to the Principal or an Assistant Principal as soon as possible, who will follow the Four Critical Actions - <https://www.schools.vic.gov.au/report-child-abuse-schools#four-critical-actions>
- Make detailed notes of the incident or disclosure using the [Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: Template](#) and ensure that those notes are kept and stored securely in the locked Safe Room.
- If the staff member is a mandatory reporter and reasonably believes that a student has suffered physical and/or sexual abuse from which the child's parents have not protected the child, they must make a report to DFFH Child Protection.
- If the staff member has formed a 'reasonable belief' that a sexual offence has been committed against a child, they must make a report to Victoria Police.

In circumstances where a member of the leadership team disagrees that a report needs to be made, but the staff member has formed a 'reasonable belief' that the child is in need of protection and/or has been the victim of sexual abuse, the staff member must still contact DFFH Child Protection and/or Victoria Police to make the report.

Responsibilities of Assistant Principal (Wellbeing)

The Assistant Principal (Wellbeing) is responsible for promptly managing the school's response to an incident, suspicion or disclosure of child abuse, and ensuring that the incident, suspicion or disclosure is taken seriously. The Assistant Principal - Wellbeing is also responsible for responding appropriately to a child who makes or is affected by an allegation of child abuse.

If the Assistant Principal - Wellbeing receives a report from a school staff member or member of the school community of a suspicion, disclosure or incident of child abuse, they must:

- Follow the [Four Critical Actions](#) as soon as possible, including:
 - Responding to an emergency,
 - Reporting to authorities/referring to services,
 - Contacting parents/carers, and
 - Providing ongoing support.
- Make detailed notes of the incident or disclosure, including actions taken using the [Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: Template](#) and ensure that those notes are kept and stored securely in the locked Safe Room. They are also responsible for ensuring that any staff member who reported the incident, disclosure or suspicion to them also makes and keeps notes of the incident.

At Park Ridge Primary School, the Assistant Principal (Wellbeing) will be responsible for ensuring that there is a prompt response to the disclosure and that the child is appropriately supported.

If the Principal/other nominated staff member responsible above is unavailable, Assistant Principal (Curriculum) will take on the role and responsibilities described in this section.

Duty of Care and Ongoing Support for Students

Fulfilling the requirements in this procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of abuse.

All staff have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm to students. All staff must ensure that the Assistant Principal (Wellbeing) or other appropriate staff member is aware of any incidents, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible after they occur. This will allow appropriate supports to be put in place for the student affected.

For School Visitors, Volunteers and School Community Members

All community members aged 18 years or over should be aware of their legal obligations – see *Failure to disclose offence* above, in this Policy.

Any person can make a report to DFFH Child Protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection. For contact details see the Four Critical Actions - <https://www.schools.vic.gov.au/report-child-abuse-schools#four-critical-actions>

There is no requirement for community members to inform the school if they are making a disclosure to DFFH Child Protection or the Victoria Police. However, where a community member is concerned about the safety of a child or children at the school, and where disclosure of that concern will not compromise any potential police investigation, the community member should report this concern to the Principal so that appropriate steps to support the student can be taken.

