



# Child Safe Environment

## Policy

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This policy was last ratified by School Council on 6/8/18

### 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 from 1 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.

The child safe standards are part of the Victorian Government's response to the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations. The Betrayal of Trust Report found that while the majority of children are safe in organisations and in the community, more work could be done to strengthen existing approaches to child safety.

The child safe standards aim to drive cultural change in organisations that provide services for children so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in everyday thinking and practice.

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

### The Child Safe Standards

To create and maintain a child safe organisation, an entity to which the standards apply must have:

**Standard 1:** Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements

**Standard 2:** A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety

**Standard 3:** A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children

**Standard 4:** Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel (See VIT and Working with Children Policies)

**Standard 5:** Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse (DET Mandatory Reporting policy which can be found at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/childprotection.aspx>)

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

**Standard 7:** Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children (See Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy)

### Aims:

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



This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people. This policy will apply across a range of school forums (e.g. camps, online) and outside of school hours.

### **Our commitment to child safety**

- Mt Eliza PS 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.
- Mt Eliza PS has zero tolerance for child abuse.
- Mt Eliza PS is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.
- Every person involved in Mt Eliza PS has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays 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.

### **Implementation:**

Mt Eliza Primary School 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, with particular attention paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

In its planning, decision-making and operations, Mt Eliza Primary School will:

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety
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 issues
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
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

#### Policy and procedures

Policies and procedures outlining Mt Eliza Primary School's approach to the Child Safe Standards are outlined below. This policy should also be read in conjunction with the 'On-site Supervision', 'Working with Children Check', 'Mandatory Reporting', 'Student Welfare', 'Student Engagement', 'Discipline' and 'Bullying and Harassment' policies. For further information, please contact the school's Principal or Assistant Principal. All policies are available on the school's website.

#### A child-safe culture

Mt Eliza Primary School's culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

#### Personnel understand their roles and

School leaders and managers will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children

<u>responsibilities/Code of Conduct</u>	and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's Code of Conduct. The school's Code of Conduct sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Refer to the Victorian Institute of Teaching and Victorian Teachers Professional Codes of Conduct and Ethics.
<u>Human resources practices and training</u>	The school applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with them. We will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. All prospective staff and volunteers are required to undergo National Criminal History Records check and maintain a valid Working with Children Check.
<u>Reporting a child safety concern or complaint</u>	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.
<u>Risk reduction and management</u>	The 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.
<u>Listening to children</u>	The school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/caregivers. We encourage child and parent/caregiver involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/care givers to understand their rights and their responsibilities.
<u>Confidentiality and Privacy</u>	Considerable importance is placed on safeguarding the confidentiality and and privacy of information about particular children and their families. The collection, use and storage of information is included in school policies.
<u>Breaches</u>	Breaches of Duty of Care and Mandatory Reporting Obligations are identified in the specific policies.
<u>Policy evaluation and review</u>	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.
<u>Professional Development</u>	School Council and staff will be provided with annual training on their individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse.

Communication

The school community will be informed of this policy through the Newsletter and the policy will be available on the School Website.

Definitions

Ministerial Order 870 provides definitions, including:

*Child abuse* includes

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

*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* 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 staff means:*

In a government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:

- employed under Part 2.4 of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (ETR Act)* in the government teaching service or
- employed under a contract of service by the council of the school under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act or
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)

Related policies and Documents

School Policy Advisory Guide – Duty of Care  
School Policy Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations  
DET Child Wellbeing and Safety Framework

**Evaluation:**

This policy will be reviewed as part of MEPS two –year review cycle – August 2020

School Council President: Kymberly Davidson

Signature:

Date:

