



## **GOOD LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE IN CHILD SAFE SCHOOLS STATEMENT**

### **Preamble**

The child safe standards require schools that provide services for children to have strategies to embed in their school a culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements.

Protecting children from abuse is everybody's responsibility, and a school's leadership is essential to instilling a child safety culture in a school.

This good leadership and governance commitment is a foundation statement for the work we do and improvements we will make in this area in the future. It is tabled at our School Council as a statement of this.

### **Leadership in a child safe environment**

- Working with children can be very rewarding, and it brings additional responsibilities.
- We will act to protect children from abuse in our school, and build an environment where children feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. This requires a culture of child safety to be embedded throughout our school so that child safety is part of everyone's everyday thinking and practice. Such a culture is achieved through proactive leadership in demonstrating the values, attitudes and behaviours of a school.
- A child safe environment is the product of a range of strategies and initiatives. Our school should foster a culture of openness, inclusiveness and awareness. Children and adults should know what to do if they observe or are subject to abuse or inappropriate behaviour.
- All staff and volunteers should consider the safety of all children and recognise the importance of cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

### **For the purposes of these standards, abuse constitutes any act committed against a child involving:**

- physical violence
- sexual offences
- serious emotional or psychological abuse
- serious neglect.

### **1. Governance in a child safe environment**

1.1. Leadership should take preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety issues. The safety and wellbeing of children in our school should be a paramount consideration when developing activities, policies and management practices.

### **2. Leadership responsibilities**

2.1. Leadership is responsible for embedding a culture of child safety in our school. Leadership need to take the lead in protecting children from abuse, and should be made aware of child abuse allegations and risks and take responsibility for ensuring an appropriate response.

### **3. We will ensure that all allegations of child abuse and child safety concerns are treated very seriously by our school. This includes complying with all legal requirements, including reporting suspicions of child abuse to police and/or child protection.**

3.1. **If any person reading this document believes a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.**

3.2. Parents can get support from Parentline Call 13 22 89

3.3. Children can get support from Kidshelpline Call 1800 55 1800

### **4. Identify and analyse risk of abuse**

4.1. Our school should adopt an approach to prevent, detect and respond to child abuse risks.

This includes a risk management strategy and policy that sets out how our school identifies, assess, and takes steps to reduce or remove child abuse risks.

**5. Develop a child safe policy**

5.1. Our school will develop a child safe policy which outlines our commitment to promoting children's wellbeing and protecting children from abuse with sensitivity respect and confidentiality.

**6. Develop codes of conduct**

6.1. Our school will have a code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct and care required when working and interacting with children or include elements of child safety in an existing code.

**7. Choose suitable employees and volunteers**

7.1. Our school will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. This includes police record and identity checks, Working with Children Checks where required, face-to-face interviews and detailed reference checks from previous employers, including from the applicant's most recent manager.

**8. Support, train, supervise and enhance performance**

8.1. Our school will ensure that volunteers and employees who work with children have ongoing supervision, support and training so that their performance is developed and enhanced to help protect children from abuse.

8.2. We will appoint a Child Safety Officer. A Child Safety Officer is a person in our school who has knowledge of child safety issues and could be a point of contact for others who have questions or concerns or want to report an allegation of abuse. This person will be the Assistant Principal Student Services.

**9. Promote inclusion**

9.1. Our school should be inclusive to all children and families who meet our Specialist selection processes. In particular, our school should establish a culture that supports:

9.1.1. cultural safety for Aboriginal children

9.1.2. cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds

9.1.3. the safety of children with a disability

**10. Empower and promote the participation of children in decision-making**

10.1. Our school should promote the involvement and participation of children in developing and maintaining child safe environments. We will listen to children and take them seriously, particularly if they are disclosing abuse or concerns for their safety or the safety of other children.

**Adopted by the Richmond High School on 8 May 2018. This will be revised in June 2020**

## Appendix to this document

### What is child abuse?

The child safe standards aim to protect children from abuse in organisations. Under the Act, child abuse includes five categories of abuse as outlined below.<sup>1</sup>

While the standards apply specifically to child abuse, organisations should look to promote children's health and wellbeing in a broader sense.

### Physical violence

Physical violence occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from a non-accidental injury or injuries inflicted by another person. Physical violence can be inflicted in many ways, including beating, shaking, burning or use of weapons (such as, belts and paddles).

Possible physical indicators:

- Unexplained bruises
- Burns and/or fractured bones

Possible behavioural indicators:

- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Wearing long sleeved clothes on hot days (to hide bruising or other injury)
- Fear of specific people
- Unexplained absences
- Academic problems

### Sexual offences

Sexual offences occur when a person involves the child in sexual activity, or deliberately puts the child in the presence of sexual behaviours that are exploitative or inappropriate to his/her age and development. Child sexual abuse can involve a range of sexual activity including fondling, masturbation, penetration, voyeurism and exhibitionism. It can also include exposure to or exploitation through pornography or prostitution, as well as grooming behaviour.<sup>2</sup>

Possible physical indicators:

- Presence of sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy
- Vaginal or anal bleeding or discharge

Possible behavioural indicators:

- Displaying sexual behaviour or knowledge that is unusual for the child's age
- Difficulty sleeping
- Being withdrawn
- Complaining of headaches or stomach pains
- Fear of specific people
- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Displaying aggressive behaviour

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<sup>1</sup> These definitions are based on the Victorian [Child Protection Practice Manual](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/practice-context/child-protection-program-overview/1008-abuse-and-harm-legal-and-practice-definitions): <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/practice-context/child-protection-program-overview/1008-abuse-and-harm-legal-and-practice-definitions](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/practice-context/child-protection-program-overview/1008-abuse-and-harm-legal-and-practice-definitions)>

<sup>2</sup> A new grooming offence commenced in Victoria on 9 April 2014. Further information is available on the [Department of Justice website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/grooming+offence) <[www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/grooming+offence](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/grooming+offence)>

### **Serious emotional or psychological abuse**

Serious emotional or psychological abuse occurs when harm is inflicted on a child through repeated rejection, isolation, or by threats or violence. It can include derogatory name-calling and put-downs, or persistent and deliberate coldness from a person, to the extent where the behaviour of the child is disturbed or their emotional development is at serious risk of being impaired. Serious emotional or psychological abuse could also result from conduct that exploits a child without necessarily being criminal, such as encouraging a child to engage in inappropriate or risky behaviours.

Possible physical indicators:

- Delays in emotional, mental, or even physical development
- Physical signs of self-harming

Possible behavioural indicators:

- Exhibiting low self-esteem
- Exhibiting high anxiety
- Displaying aggressive or demanding behaviour
- Being withdrawn, passive and/or tearful
- Self-harming

### **Serious neglect**

Serious neglect is the continued failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention or adequate supervision, to the extent that the child's health, safety and/or development is, or is likely to be, jeopardised. Serious neglect can also occur if an adult fails to adequately ensure the safety of a child where the child is exposed to extremely dangerous or life-threatening situations.

Possible physical indicators:

- Frequent hunger
- Malnutrition
- Poor hygiene
- Inappropriate clothing

Possible behavioural indicators:

- Stealing food
- Staying at school outside of school hours
- Aggressive behaviour
- Misusing alcohol or drugs
- Academic issues

**Call the police on 000 if you have immediate concerns for a child's safety.**

Information about child protection services can be found on the [Department of Health and Human Services website](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/crisis-and-emergency/reporting-child-abuse) <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/crisis-and-emergency/reporting-child-abuse](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/crisis-and-emergency/reporting-child-abuse)>.