



CHILD SAFE

Rationale:

Harrisfield Primary School is committed to child safety and to our children being principled, caring, balanced members of our community. We are committed to our children's safety, participation and empowerment and have zero tolerance of child abuse. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously. The school is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks and all staff undertake Mandatory Reporting training.

We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers and are committed to the cultural safety of children from diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

Aims:

Our children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our school. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say. We promote diversity and tolerance in our school, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. We promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability

Our staff and volunteers

This policy informs our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our school. All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct.

Implementation:

Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

The school culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

For all jobs that require child connected work there will be an induction process providing explicit information about the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities and the school's child safety practices, including the code of conduct.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect all 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.

Harrisfield Primary School has a zero tolerance for any form of child abuse.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ appropriately skilled people to work with children. We identify selection criteria through Recruitment Online which clearly demonstrates our commitment to child safety. The school understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

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. We carry out reference checks to ensure that we are addressing the person's suitability for the job and working with children. Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration is compulsory and we require proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications.

Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

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

Privacy

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 and will disclose how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative responsibilities

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties.
- **Failure to disclose offence:** In addition to mandatory reporting and duty of care obligations, any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 must report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence except in limited circumstances, such as where the information has already been reported to Child Protection or the child is over 16 when the belief is formed.
- **Failure to protect:** Any staff member in a position of authority, who becomes aware that an adult associated with their organisation (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the care, authority or

supervision of the organisation, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk. This may include, for example, removing the adult from child-related work pending investigation. If a staff member in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence. The offence applies only to adults in a position of authority within an organisation, including Principals, senior school staff, regional directors and other senior managers.

Risk management

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.

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, swimming), and online environments.

Harrisfield Primary School has a zero tolerance for any form of child abuse.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

The school takes all allegations seriously and works 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.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place.

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:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour

Evaluation:

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

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated on October 29th, 2018 and is scheduled for review in 10/2019.