

CHILD SAFE STANDARDS POLICY

Ratified by School Council: August 2016
Review: August 2019



Rationale:

Mt Dandenong Primary School is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making. Mt Dandenong Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse and 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 Dandenong Primary School 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.

This policy outlines how we will/have created and will maintain a Child Safe school environment (this includes on school premises, camps, excursions, online and other school events). It addresses each of the seven standards outlined by the Victorian Regulation and Qualifications Authority as being integral to maintaining a culture of safety for children.

Definition:

Child abuse can be defined as an act by parents or caregivers, which endangers a child, or young person's physical or emotional health or development. Child abuse can be a single incident, but usually takes place over time. In Victoria, under the Children Youth and Families Act 2005 a child or young person is a person under eighteen years of age. Child abuse can occur in the following ways:

- **Physical abuse** occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from an injury inflicted by a child's parent or caregiver. The injury may be inflicted intentionally or may be the inadvertent consequence of physical punishment or physically aggressive treatment of a child. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures
- **Sexual abuse** occurs when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve the child in sexual activity and the child's parent or caregiver has not protected the child. Physical force is sometimes involved
- **Emotional Abuse** occurs when a child's parent or caregiver repeatedly rejects the child or uses threats to frighten the child. This may involve name calling, put downs or continual coldness from the parent or caregiver, to the extent that it significantly damages the child's physical, social, intellectual or emotional development
- **Neglect** is the failure to provide the child with the necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, medical attention or supervision, to the extent that the child's

health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed. (Source: Department of Health and Human Services).

Aims:

To ensure that Mt Dandenong Primary School:

- Fosters an organisational culture in which safety, inclusivity and support for all children underpins all decisions and actions
- Ensures that maintaining a culture of Child Safety is a cornerstone of the future development of policy and procedure
- Details the actions it will take to promote child safety
- Supports, encourages and enables School Council, the Principal, school staff, parents and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters
- Supports or assists children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse
- Inform and educate the school community about the Child Safe Standards
- Are compliant with Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) policies and procedures, the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 and Ministerial Order No. 870.

Implementation:

- Although this policy is the responsibility of all members of the school community, the Principal has the overall responsibility of implementing this policy, however may choose to delegate certain roles to suitably qualified staff
- All members of the school community will be made clear about their individual roles and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards
- External service providers that engage with the school have their own regulatory body to ensure they meet the Child Safe Standards, however the school will ensure that they have suitable qualifications and meet these standards
- The Child Safe Standards and this policy will be communicated to the school community at least once a year in the following ways:
 - **School Council:** brief/review of Child Safe Standards once a year and review of the policy as per school schedule
 - **Staff:** Briefing at the start of each school year. New and casual relief staff will have the Child Safe Standards included as part of their induction
 - **Parents:** information related to the Child Safe Standards will be included in the newsletter at appropriate and meaningful times throughout the year. All information regarding the Child Safe Standards will be on the school website
 - **Students:** Through regular circle sessions, students will be supported in understanding what safety means, how to support each other and how to seek help if needed
- The school will complete the Memorandum of Understanding for the Child Safe Standards, have this approved by School Council and submit it to the VRQA (Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority)

- The school will implement the following strategies, aligned to the seven Child Safety Standards (Ministerial Order No. 870) to ensure a culture of safety for its children:

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

- strategy development and implementation
- roles and responsibilities
- informing the community

Mt Dandenong Primary School will:

- 1.1 Have goals and related strategies in its School Strategic Plan and Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) related to Student Engagement and Student Wellbeing
- 1.2 Have a dedicated Wellbeing Team who will discuss and review wellbeing practices, including those of child safety, in regular meetings
- 1.3 Ensure there is provision in the school budgets to fund child safety and student welfare priorities
- 1.4 Assign Student Wellbeing Team Leader and e-Smart Coordinator as core roles of staff in the school
- 1.5 Ensure that the ICT team maintain e-Smart accreditation by continuing to implement and refine online safety initiatives throughout the school
- 1.6 Have regular meetings with DET SSS Staff (Psychologist and Speech Pathologist and other allied health workers) to discuss student wellbeing, safety and educational needs
- 1.7 Support all students' (and their family's) safety and wellbeing through the PSD (Program for Students with a Disability)
- 1.8 Assign Student Support yard duty time to teachers to monitor the welfare and safety of identified students
- 1.9 Assign meeting dates in the school calendar to allow for professional development related to child safety and staff training (e.g. Mandatory Reporting Training)
- 1.10 Ensure staff complete an appropriate amount of professional learning relating to teaching and working with students with a disability, in accordance with the Victorian Institute of Teaching regulations
- 1.11 As part of the induction and mentoring of new staff share and discuss this policy
- 1.12 Maintain detailed records of student safety and wellbeing issues. Highly confidential issues will be kept in a file in the Principal's / Leading Teacher's Office. Reports from SSS professionals will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the Leading Teacher's Office
- 1.13 Review child safety practices each year, utilising the DET's Risk Management Template (Appendix 2)
- 1.14 Review child safety as part of the annual report as per DET guidelines.

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

Mt Dandenong Primary School will:

2.1 Ensure the following policies (all of which support the maintenance of a Child Safe Environment) are implemented, regularly reviewed and available on the school's website:

- **Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy:** outlines proactive and reactive responses the school takes with regard to student engagement, wellbeing and inclusion
- **Bullying and Harassment Policy:** outlines the proactive and reactive measures the school implements when incidences of bullying occur
- **Equal Opportunity Policy:** outlines the school's commitment to providing a supportive environment - free of discrimination with equal opportunity for all
- **Special Educational Needs Policy:** outlines the processes in place to ensure that the diverse needs (intellectual, physical, social and behavioural) of our student population are catered for
- **Mandatory Reporting Policy (DET):** outlines the process and requirement for reporting incidences of child abuse
- **Working With Children Check Policy:** outlines the procedures in place for ensuring that all people working within the school have had the required checks to ensure their suitability to work with or in the vicinity of children
- **First Aid Policy:** outlines how the school manages incidences of physical harm and communicates these to parents / carers.

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

Mt Dandenong Primary School will:

3.1 Adopt the Code of Conduct which establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children, clearly outlining acceptable and unacceptable behaviours.

Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel

Mt Dandenong Primary School will:

4.1 Follow Merit and Equity-based recruiting processes outlined by DET whilst adhering to the Child Safe Standards

4.2 Include the 'Child Safe Environments' clause (as provided in the Recruitment Online School's Guide) in all position descriptions for job vacancies

4.3 During the application process, the panel will assess the applicant's:

- Motivation to work with children
- Relevant and verifiable child-related work experience
- Understanding of professional boundaries

- Communication and interpersonal skills
- 4.4 Before a letter of offer is provided, the chair of the selection panel (or a delegate) will check the following:
- Two forms of identification e.g. driver's licence, passport etc.
 - Academic transcripts/qualifications
 - Work history and previous employment details are accurate
 - Gaps in the applicant's employment history and are there valid reasons for this e.g. travel, study, family leave
- 4.5 Check that the applicant has any relevant experience working with children outside employment e.g. volunteering, tutoring or coaching
- 4.6 Ensure all teachers have a current VIT (Victorian Institute of Teaching) card. Through the VIT process teachers will undertake a police check (timing deemed by VIT)
- 4.7 That referees (preferably the most current employer / manager) can verify:
- There is not a personal relationship between the applicant's supervisor or manager that may affect the objectivity of the reference
 - They have directly supervised the applicant working with children and/or deem them suitable to do so
 - They see them as being suitable to the applied for role
 - Has the referee any concerns with the applicant working with children?
 - Did the referee have any concerns about the applicant adhering to Child Safe Standards?
 - Have the referees observed the applicant managing the behaviour of a child and what did they notice?
 - That any written referee statements are authentic
- 4.8 Ensure volunteers provide a copy of their Working with Children Check (WWCC) and are signed in at the office (see Volunteer Policy for more detail)
- 4.9 Sight WWCC of contractors and other visitors who enter the school and ensure they are signed in at the office and (see Visitor Policy for more detail)
- 4.10 Ensure visitors sign in at the office (see Visitor Policy for more detail)
- 4.11 Ensure all new staff are aware of child safe standards and their obligations for mandatory reporting as part of the induction and mentoring process
- 4.12 Ensure time is allocated for staff to update their Mandatory Reporting Training each year (DET requirement). Provisions will be made in the school calendar of any other professional development sessions we need to undertake related to child safety.

Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

Mt Dandenong Primary School will:

- 5.1 Comply with the DET's Mandatory Reporting Policy outlining all DET employee's response to suspected child abuse
- 5.2 Ensure all staff are trained annually in this area using resources provided by the DET

5.3 In any cases where a staff member is considering making a report, ensure they consult the Step-by-Step Guide to Making a Report to Child Protection or Child FIRST and inform the Principal

5.4 Follow the **'Four Critical Actions for Schools'**: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures or Suspicions of Child Abuse (see appendix 5)

5.5 In accordance with the DET's Mandatory Reporting Policy, ensure that:

- All members of the Teaching Service who believe on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse, must report their concerns to Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection
- All other school staff who believe on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection or therapeutic treatment or have significant concerns, are encouraged to report their concerns to DHS Child Protection, Victoria Police or Child First
- All adults are required to report to police if they know or reasonably believe that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16. It will be a criminal offence to fail to comply with this obligation
- Staff are to keep their own notes of any interactions / reports to DHHS or Child First and discuss this with the Principal so they can update their files.

Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove the risk of abuse

Mt Dandenong Primary School will:

6.1 Monitor sick bay attendances and student absences on an ongoing basis. Specific incidences, trends and children of concern are discussed and followed up as required

6.2 Ask for parent permission to use photographs or video of students for public forums, e.g. newspapers, online, newsletters and adhere to any requests not to publish documents

6.3 Keep photos and videos of students on a secure network

6.4 Provide yard duty teacher supervision for all recess and lunch breaks as well as from 8:45-9:00am and from 3:30-3:45pm

6.5 Complete risk assessments for any excursions considering the Child Safe Standards when doing so

6.6 Consider Child Safe practices and potential issues in our risk registers for Camps and Excursions

6.7 Risks are reviewed after any incidences and adjustments made

6.8 Ensure provisions are made for staff training and professional development around child safety

6.9 Ensure our school grounds are safe for children and that children are encouraged to display safe and sensible behaviours (such as not playing in out-of-bounds areas).

Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children

Mt Dandenong Primary School will:

- 7.1 Explicitly plan for, teach and model the guidelines of the Victorian Curriculum
- 7.2 Embed explicit teaching of wellbeing, within the school's program of inquiry and across the curriculum by focussing on (but not limited to):
 - Resilience Building
 - Positive Relationships
 - Emotional Regulation and Positive Choices
 - Conflict Resolution and Restorative Practices
 - Agency, Motivation and Achievement (Self Determination)
- 7.3 Implement the Student Code of Behaviour and review or update annually
- 7.4 Utilise aspects of the Bounce Back resilience resources and Circle Time as required
- 7.5 Support the development of positive relationships between levels and through the Prep/Year 6 Buddy program.

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

Reference:

- VRQA <http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafepages/standards.html>
- DET www.education.vic.gov.au/protect