



Child Safe Policy Preamble

Preamble: Child safe standards

The child safe standards require organisations that provide services for children to have a child safe policy or a statement of commitment to child safety. You may already have an existing child safe policy or statement of commitment. You can use this resource, which includes a sample child safe policy and statement of commitment, to develop or review your organisation's child safe policy and statement of commitment.

What is a child safe policy?

A child safe policy is an overarching document that provides an overview of key elements of an organisation's approach to child safety. It should:

- clearly state the organisation's zero tolerance of child abuse
- detail the organisation's child safe processes and procedures, or link to existing documents that include child safety considerations - for example, its reporting procedures (including leadership responsibilities), how to respond to an allegation of child abuse, human resources and recruitment practices, and risk management strategy and procedures
- clearly state the organisation's commitment to cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability
- detail expectations and requirements of staff and volunteers to ensure the protection of children, and the training and support staff receive
- include contact details for people to access information in relation to child safety, such as the child safety officer. A child safety officer/champion is a person in your organisation 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 child abuse. You could consider including child safety officer/champion duties in the person's job description
- include how and when the policy and other child safety tools are reviewed to help organisation improve.

Statement of commitment to child safety.

Yarra Glen Primary School is committed to child safety by clearly stating that our organisation:

- has zero tolerance for child abuse
- actively works to listen to and empower children
- has systems to protect children from abuse, and will take all allegations and concerns very seriously and responds to them consistently in line with the organisation's policies and procedures
- is committed to promoting cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

Further information

Further information on child safe standards can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services website www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/children,-youth-and-family-services/creating-child-safe-organisations

Additional resources for organisations in the child safe standards toolkit can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services website: www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards

In particular, An Overview to the Victorian child safe standards, has information to help organisations understand the requirements of each of the child safe standards, including examples of measures organisations can put in place, a self-audit tool and a glossary of key terms: www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc

Note for registered schools: a forthcoming Ministerial Order under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 will contain the minimum actions that schools must take to meet each of the child safe standards. There will be a lead in time before regulation will commence to allow schools time to prepare. The Department of Education and Training and the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority will provide information and materials specifically for schools to assist with capacity building and compliance.

Registered schools can contact the Department of Education and Training: child.safe.schools@edumail.vic.gov.au
Early childhood services operating under the National Quality Framework or Children's Services Act 1996 should contact: licensed.childrens.services@edumail.vic.gov.au

Licensed children's services enquiry line: **1300 307 415**

The child safe policy will be publicly available to help raise awareness about the importance of child safety in organisations and demonstrate your commitment to protecting children from abuse, for example by request and in welcome packs for new personnel, children and families.



Child Safety Policy

Statement of Purpose:

Our commitment to child safety

- Yarra Glen Primary School is committed to child safety.
- We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff, families and volunteers.
- We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
- We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- We are committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- Yarra Glen Primary School has human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- Our organisations is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of **all** students, Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.
- We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.
- If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Our children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our school. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of 'all' children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Our staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct/DET Policy, Procedures and guidelines/School Policy which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation (including parents and carers) understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse. (This includes observing inappropriate behaviour online on all social media, internet sites and also includes text and email.)

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the safety of all children, 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.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to YGPS's code of conduct and supporting policies to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements, which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations. (ie: includes-Working With Children Check, Victorian Institute of Teachers Registration)

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to currently **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 and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

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.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents/carers 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. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative responsibilities

Yarra Glen Primary School takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- Failure to disclose: Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- Failure to protect: People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- Any personnel who are 'Mandatory Reporters' must comply with their duties.
- 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, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Our organisation takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work 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 (see information about failure to disclose above).

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.(this includes observing inappropriate behaviour online on all social media, internet sites, text and email)

Policy adopted in: July 2016

Policy due for review in: July 2018, 2020, 2022