



Strathmerton Primary

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

PURPOSE

Strathmerton 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. Strathmerton Primary has a commitment to zero tolerance of child abuse. We support and respect all children as well as our staff and volunteers. Strathmerton Primary is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people feel safe, and their voices are heard when decisions are made that affect their lives. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability. We want all children at this school to be safe, happy and empowered. Every person involved in Strathmerton Primary 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. We have legal and moral obligations, which we follow rigorously, to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety.

OBJECTIVE

To ensure that Strathmerton Primary's parents/carers, staff, students, volunteers, visitors and the wider community, are aware of the processes and procedures we have in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all of our students.

SCOPE

This policy focuses on establishing mechanisms to:

- ensure all children feel safe and supported at school.
- prevent child abuse by identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- ensure that processes and procedures are in place to protect children from child abuse.
- value and empower children in decision making processes.
- ensure that all staff (including contractors), volunteers, visitors to the school and parents/carers, understand the school's child safety guidelines and how to behave appropriately with and towards children.
- comply with Ministerial Order No. 870 and the Child Safety Standards
- comply with reporting obligations under child protection law and criminal law.

DEFINITIONS

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.

Child abuse includes any act committed against a child involving:

- a sexual offence
- a grooming offence; or
- the infliction on a child of physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm or serious neglect.

School staff includes individuals working in a school environment who are:

- 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
- volunteers or contracted service providers (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary).

Child-connected work includes all work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present. *School environment* includes 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); and
- 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).

POLICY

Strathmerton Primary is committed to child safety. In its planning, decision-making and operations Strathmerton Primary will:

- Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
- Value and empower children to participate in decisions, which affect their lives;
- Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
- Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
- Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
- Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
- 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;
- Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
- Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
- Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.
- Strathmerton Primary's school council and leadership team will rigorously monitor the school's adherence to this child safety policy.
- All of our staff (including contractors and volunteers) must agree to abide by the school's Child Safety Code Of Conduct, which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.
- Strathmerton Primary has specific policies and procedures in place to support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve our commitments.
- Strathmerton Primary is committed to supporting and enabling our staff and volunteers through provision of regular training and education on child abuse risks.
- Child Safety will be a standard agenda item for school council and school meetings.
- Strathmerton Primary has procedures in place to enable all staff and volunteers as well as parents/carers and children, to raise any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.
- The Principal and Well-Being Coordinator will assume the role of the primary Child Safety Officers, acting as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of child safety.
- This policy covers all school environments both during and outside of school hours, including any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the School Council or the Principal.
- In implementing the minimum child safety standards Strathmerton Primary will take account of the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable; and make reasonable efforts to accommodate these matters.
- The school's mission statement 'Strathmerton Primary School is committed to lifelong learning by providing an inclusive, supportive and nurturing community in which diversity is valued and celebrated', underpins our commitment to child safety and the Child Safety Standards.
- Strathmerton Primary will make reasonable efforts to communicate our child safety policies and procedures to the Strathmerton Primary school community.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our Children:

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active members of the Strathmerton Primary school community. We will involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We will listen to their views and respect what they have to say. We will promote diversity and tolerance at this school and promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

We will promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and Torres Strait islanders. We will promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds. We will work to ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Strathmerton Primary staff will endeavour to deliver appropriate education about child abuse awareness and prevention to the students.

Strathmerton Primary staff will endeavour to promote the Child Safe Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly for children.

Strategies for educating students will be articulated in Strathmerton Primary's Student Engagement & Wellbeing Policy.

- We take 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. When recruiting staff and volunteers we are aware that we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.
- All people engaged in child-connected work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this check.
- When employing staff we carry out reference checks and police record checks.
- All teachers employed at this school must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

Staff and Volunteers:

This policy as well as our Child Safety Code of Conduct guides the school's staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation. All staff and volunteers must agree to the Child Safety Code of Conduct, which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

Training and Supervision:

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our school understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility. Training includes developing skills to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse, promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, promote the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds and to develop their skills to make adjustments to provide a safe, inclusive environment for children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be regularly supervised. This is to ensure they understand the school's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse. It is also for the purpose of checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate with reference to the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct.

Allegations, Concerns, and Complaints:

Our school culture aims for all staff and volunteers as well as parents/carers and children to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We are aware that some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers reporting allegations of abuse or that for some communication in English may be a barrier. We will endeavour to be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible. Strathmerton Primary has protocols and procedures in place to enable all staff and volunteers as well as parents/carers and children, to raise any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

Depending on the severity and urgency of the matter any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, which may include:

- The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) – Child Protection

- Victoria Police

Legislative Responsibilities:

Strathmerton Primary takes its 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 police.
- *Failure to protect:* A person in a position of authority in an organisation will commit this offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

Child Abuse:

Strathmerton Primary takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to respond quickly and thoroughly. Such issues can be reported to:

- The Principal
- The Well-Being Coordinator
- Teachers at the school.

Our staff have been trained to deal appropriately with allegations, as well as how to support or assist children who disclose child abuse or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse. In such situations the school will follow actions outlined in the Child Protection Reporting Policy. This policy outlines our clear expectations for all staff and volunteers in making a report about a young person who might be in need of protection.

The DET guide 'Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools' includes comprehensive, detailed guidance and support for all staff.

First and foremost, we will ensure that children are safe from harm after which we will follow the procedures outlined in this document. This process includes making appropriate reports, following up and ensuring that children and any others involved receive appropriate support. We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using the Child Safety Incident Report form. All information is considered confidential and written reports will be held securely.

Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported to DHHS Child Protection/Police/Child FIRST Report depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

We each 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/protect). 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.

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.

Risk Management:

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, CPS proactively manages risks of abuse to children by removing and reducing these risks and follows the Child Safety Standards.

The school has risk management strategies to identify, assess and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments and online environments.

The school's risk management includes:

- The Child Safety Code of Conduct – outlines acceptable and unacceptable behaviour with respect to child safety and child abuse. The Child Safety Code of Conduct is publically available.
- Appointing a Child Safety Officer
- Screening as part of the staff recruitment process
- Working With Children checks, Police Record checks, reference checks
- Sign in processes at the school office

- On and off site supervision of children during recess and lunch breaks as well 15 minutes before and after school – staff carry mobile phones
- ICT Acceptable Use Agreement for students
- Teacher supervision of student internet usage
- Protocols to ensure children do not move around the school individually during class time
- Out of bounds areas in the school to ensure that children are not placed at risk
- Staff and volunteer training
- Child safe environments information and awareness for visitors, staff, volunteers and contractors
- Adequate monitoring of visitors, staff, volunteers and contractors
- Refresher training for staff – see eLearning mandatory reporting module.

The Seven Standards

Standard 1: Embedding an organisational culture of child safety

As a registered government primary school we have a legal and moral responsibility for keeping our children safe. At Strathmerton Primary School we are committed to taking reasonable steps to accommodate the needs of all children irrespective of their culture, language, disability or vulnerability.

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

At Strathmerton Primary School we have in place policies and procedures which address the issue of child safety. The school council is responsible for the implementation of these policies. Our current policies within the school include the child safe code of conduct, visitor's policy, mandatory reporting policy, critical incident & recovery policy, duty of care policy, cybersafety and wellbeing policy, social media policy, working with children check policy and yard duty policy. These form part of the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) requirements. The policies are formulated with staff, parents and the school council committee. The principal has the key responsibility for ensuring the government's child safe agenda.

Standard 3: A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations of what is appropriate behaviour

School staff are expected and required to not engage in child abuse as defined by Ministerial Order No. 870. Further, school staff are expected and required to apply child safety practices to their professional activities. For example: Acceptable behaviours

All staff, volunteers and school council members are responsible for supporting the safety of children by:

- ☑ Adhering to the school's child safe policy and upholding the school's statement of commitment to child safety at all times;
- ☑ Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse;
- ☑ Treating everyone in the school community with respect;
- ☑ Listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child;
- ☑ Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child's selfidentification);
- ☑ Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination);
- ☑ Promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities);
- ☑ Ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not alone with a child;
- ☑ Reporting any child safety concerns to the school's leadership;
- ☑ Reporting any allegations of child abuse to the school's leadership;
- ☑ If an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe; Understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to mandatory reporting and reporting under the Crimes Act 1958;
- ☑ Reporting to the Victorian Institute of Teaching any charges, committals for trial or convictions in relation to a sexual offence by a registered teacher, or certain allegations or concerns about a registered teacher.

Unacceptable behaviours Staff and volunteers must not:

- ☒ Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse;
- ☒ Develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children);
- ☒ Exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps);
- ☒ Put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors);
- ☒ Initiate unnecessary physical contact which children or do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes;
- ☒ Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children;
- ☒ Use inappropriate language in the presence of children;
- ☒ Express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children;
- ☒ Discriminate against any child because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability;
- ☒ Have contact with a child or their family outside of school without the school's leadership knowledge and/or consent of the school governing authority's approval (for example, unauthorised after hours tutoring, private instrumental/other lessons or sport coaching). Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate;
- ☒ Have any online contact with a child (including by social media, email, instant messaging etc.) or their family (unless necessary e.g. by providing families with e-newsletters or assisting students with their school work);
- ☒ Use any personal communication channels/devices such as a personal email account;
- ☒ Exchange personal contact details such as phone numbers, social networking sites or email addresses;
- ☒ Photograph or video a child without the consent of the parent or guardians;
- ☒ Work with children whilst under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs;
- ☒ Consume alcohol or drugs at school or at school events in the presence of children.

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

Screening

Staff involved in child-connected work at Strathmerton Primary School must have an up to date 'Working With Children Check', proof of their identity and qualifications, an historical record of their work involving children and references which address their suitability for working with children.

Supervision

The principal must be satisfied that staff involved with child-connected work remain suited to that employment both initially and in an on-going sense.

Training

Induction of new staff engaged in child-connected work will include being briefed on the intent and detail of the child safe policy. In particular, Standard 3, above. 5

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

to the school's policy on Mandatory Reporting.

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

Risk Event or Environment	Existing Management strategies or internal controls	Likelihood	Consequence	Current risk assessment	New risk management controls or internal controls	Who is responsible?	Residual risk
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No organisational culture of child safety – lack of leadership, public commitment and frequent messaging	Child safety code of conduct Strategies developed to embed culture of child safety	Possible	Severe	Very High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies to embed organisational culture of child safety are reviewed Statement of commitment to child safety is publicly available 	Principal, School Council Chair	Low
Inappropriate behaviour is not reported and addressed	Child safety code of conduct Clear child safety reporting procedures Performance management procedures	Unlikely	Severe	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies to embed organisational culture of child safety are reviewed Refresher training for staff – e.g. eLearning mandatory reporting module 	Principal, School Council Chair	Low
Unquestioning trust of long term employees and contractors or norms	Strategies developed to embed culture of child safety Clear child safety reporting procedures	Possible	Major	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refresher training for staff – e.g. eLearning mandatory reporting module 	Principal, School Council Chair	Low
Recruitment of an	WWCC or Victorian Institute of	Unlikely	Major	Medium	Processes updated to require:	Principal, School	Low

Risk Event or Environment	Existing Management strategies or internal controls	Likelihood	Consequence	Current risk assessment	New risk management controls or internal controls	Who is responsible?	Residual risk
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inappropriate person	Teaching registration					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminal history search • Pre-employment reference check includes asking about child safety 	Council President	
Engagement with children online	Child safety code of conduct Strategies developed to embed culture of child safety	Possible	Moderate	Medium		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train students and staff to detect inappropriate behaviour • Ensure appropriate settings on all student technologies 	Principal, School Council President	Low
Unknown people and environments at excursions and camps	Child safety code of conduct Strategies developed to embed culture of child safety Clear child safety reporting procedures	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of new or changed environments for child safety risks • Ensure code of conduct and strategies apply in all school contexts 	Principal, School Council President	Low
Ad-hoc contractors on the premises (e.g. maintenance)	Child safe environments Information and awareness for visitors, staff, volunteers and contractors	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Refresher training for frequent contractors & Visitors policy for signing in at the school 	Principal, School Council President	Low

Risk Event or Environment	Existing Management strategies or internal controls	Likelihood	Consequence	Current risk assessment	New risk management controls or internal controls	Who is responsible?	Residual risk
	Adequate monitoring						

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

Standard 7 is met through four strategies, although not limited to these. They are: the Bravehearts program, Personal Development program for the senior students, the Student Representative Council, and our teaching and learning approach.

1.Bravehearts program

The Bravehearts organisation visits the school and presents to the junior students on an annual basis. Its program is all about empowering students to feel safe and how to respond to inappropriate attention.

2. Personal Development program

This annual program is designed and implemented by a health promotion officer from the local district health service who visits the school for two, 2 hour sessions. These sessions are spaced at least a week apart for students to reflect upon and ask questions if needed about relationships and puberty.

3. Student Representative Council

At the start of each year the Years 1-6 students elect eight of their own senior students to the SRC for that year. The council comprises a president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer, along with four committee members.

The council is responsible for decision making regarding their learning, fundraising and extra-curricular activities to promote a healthy lifestyle, hosting assembly and involvement in discussions about the nature of the work they will undertake at school.

This group meets regularly and liaises with the classroom teachers, Parents & Friends group and the principal.

5. Teaching and Learning

Through the school's positive behaviours program (SWPBS), all students are specifically taught the values of Supporting Each Other, Trying Your Best, Acting Safely and Respect. The students are supported in a positive and safe environment, where feeling secure at school is the norm. All students are actively encouraged to speak to any staff member if they have concerns of safety or fear.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/childsafestandards.aspx>

<http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/Pages/default.html>

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/Pages/spag.aspx>.

'Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools'

'Protecting children from abuse: for parents and carers' **Related Policies**

- Child Protection Reporting Policy
- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Excursions/Incursions Policy
- Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy
- Visitors and Volunteers Policy
- Working with Children Policy

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Child Safe Code of Conduct **REVIEW CYCLE**

This policy was updated and approved by School Council In May 2020 and is scheduled for review annually.