Our Commitment To Child Safety

Rationale:
- Our organisation 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 and volunteers.
- We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
- WRPS adheres to Victorian Child Safe Standards
- We have zero tolerance of child abuse. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- We are committed to the safety of all children including linguistically and culturally diverse and those with disabilities.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child’s safety, which we follow rigorously.
- Our organisation is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- Our organisation has robust 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 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.

Purpose Of This Policy
- Is to explain the roles and responsibilities of school staff to protect the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. The full policy with detailed information that all staff in Victorian government schools must follow is found at:

Our Children
- Is to empower our students who are vital and active participants in our organisation. 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 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 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 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.

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

• 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 this organisation’s code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further in the Student Engagement and Inclusion policy.). 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.

• As part of their initial induction to the school, staff and volunteers will be informed of child protection reporting requirements and Department policy (http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/childprotection.aspx) and will be provided with supporting documentation in their staff handbook.

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.

• 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 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.

Implementation:
• All mandated staff must successfully complete the DET online modules regarding Mandatory Reporting on a yearly basis.

• Student wellbeing is the responsibility of ALL school staff and volunteers within the school environment when they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection.

• All concerns must be reported immediately to the Principal, or in his/her absence, the Assistant Principal, or Primary Welfare Officer. The Principal must be informed if a report is made in case of further follow up.

• New staff and volunteers will be informed of mandatory reporting responsibilities and procedures as part of their induction procedure.

• The Principal will keep a record of all discussions about a student with whom there is a concern.
• If a belief has been formed by a staff member that sexual or physical abuse has taken place, documentation must be completed and filed in the student confidential files (Assistant Principal’s office).
• The teacher and/or Principal / Assistant Principal / Student Welfare Officer will contact the Department of Health & Human Services as soon as possible to make an official notification on: Phone: 1800 650 227 or After Hours Child Protection Emergency Services 131278, or Child First on 1300 854 944 or SOCAU on 5820 5878.
• Members of the Department of Health & Human Services, or associated support or intervention services that visit the school following a notification, will interview staff and children only in the presence of a Principal class member or his/her nominee.
• All documentation regarding Child Protection Reporting is to remain filed in the student confidential files (Assistant Principal’s office).
• All reports, information sheets and subsequent discussions and information are to be recorded and remain strictly confidential.
• All incidents to be monitored, and any subsequent signs or indications of abuse are also to be reported.

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. 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
• Our organisation 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.¹
  • 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.²
  • Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties.³

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).

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.

¹ A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed. Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-disclose-offence>.
³ Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse. See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about how to make a report to child protection <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first>.

• 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 observed⁴
  - someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
  - observing suspicious behaviour.

**Child Safety Officer**
Jenny Manuel
Principal
Telephone: 0358 214 953

**Regular Review**
• This policy will be reviewed every four 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.

**Evaluation:**
This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s four-year review cycle.

---

4. For example behaviour, please see An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards: