

CHILD SAFE POLICY



The child safe environments policy sets out the school's approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe; and provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards. This Policy applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors and whether or not they work in direct contact with children. It also applies to a range of school activities, on and off the school campus and within and outside of school hours.

Diamond Creek Primary School's Commitment to Child Safety

As a school staunchly 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.

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

All allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our sound 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.

Diamond Creek Primary School is committed to providing a child safe environment where children are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. 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.

Diamond Creek Primary School is duty-bound to prevent child abuse and identify risks early, and to remove and reduce these risks. We have robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers. We are committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

Every person involved in Diamond Creek 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.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

In our planning, decision-making and operations *Diamond Creek Primary School* will

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
7. 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;
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

Implementation

A Child-Safe Culture

- The school's culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.
- The school's plan for creating a child safe culture can be found on the website at www.diamondcreekps.vic.edu.au

- We promote diversity and tolerance in our school, 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.

Personnel Understand their Roles and Responsibilities / Code of Conduct

- At Diamond Creek Primary School the Principal holds the role as the Child Safe Officer
- School leaders will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect.
- The school's Code of Conduct sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.
- Staff will comply with the school's Code of Conduct.
- Our staff and volunteers are guided on how to behave with children in our school. 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. Staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.
- We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse.
- New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school'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
- 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.

Human Resources, Practices and Training

- The school applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children.
- The school will take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with our children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities.
- We understand that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.
- We carry out reference checks and police record checks when employing staff to ensure that we are recruiting the right people.
- All prospective staff and volunteers are required to undergo National Criminal History Records check and maintain a valid Working with Children Check respectively, and provide evidence of these. 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.
- We will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect.
- Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our school understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.
- Our school's 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.
- The school's approach to human resources practices that ensure child safety can be found in the Recruitment of Staff and Volunteers Policy

Reporting a Child Safety Concern or Complaint

- The school has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection.
- Immediate action should follow the steps outlined in the school's document *Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and suspicions of Child Abuse*, this will include reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection or another appropriate agency and notifying the principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns. The school will take action to respond to a complaint.
- 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 form¹, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

¹ See PROTECT Incident Reporting Form, Victorian State Government Education and Training

- 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 a school takes.
- Diamond Creek Primary School 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 observed²
 - someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
 - observing suspicious behaviour.
- The school's policy and procedures for reporting a child safety concern or complaint can be found on the website at www.diamondcreekps.vic.edu.au

Risk Reduction and Management

- The School believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes.
- In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.
- The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.
- 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/from our school on social media).
- The school's approach to Child Safety risk reduction and management can be found in the Risk Assessment Policy.

Listening to Children

- The school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, and their parents/carers.
- We encourage child and parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/carers to understand their rights and their responsibilities.
- We aim to empower our 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.
- When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct with, or abuse of, a child the school will listen to the complainant's account of things and take them seriously, check understanding and keep the child (or their parents/carers) informed about progress.

Confidentiality and Privacy

- This school collects, uses and discloses information about particular children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law. The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the School Privacy Policy.
- 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.

Legislative responsibilities

Our 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.³

² For example behaviour, please see [An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc): <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc>

³ 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.

- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our school 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.⁴
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.⁵

Policy Evaluation and Review

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school community.

Definitions

Ministerial Order 870 provides definitions, including:

Child abuse includes—

- any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
- the infliction, on a child, of physical violence or serious emotional or psychological harm or serious neglect of a child.

Child-connected work means 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.

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.

School environment means 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)
- 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).

School staff being: an individual working in a school environment who is:

- directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority;
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary); or
- a minister of religion.

Related Policies and Documents (Department of Education and Training)

[School Policy & Advisory Guide – Duty of Care](#)

[School Policy & Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations](#)

[DET Child Wellbeing and Safety Framework](#)

[School Privacy Policy](#)

Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence) <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>.

⁴ Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence) <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence>.

⁵ 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](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first) <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first>.