



PURPOSE

As part of the Victorian Government's commitment to implementing the recommendations of the *Betrayal of Trust* report (2013-14), there is a new regulatory landscape surrounding child safety in schools, underpinned by child safe standards which were introduced into law in 2015. The Child Safe Standards aim to protect children from abuse in organisations, including physical violence, sexual offences, serious emotional or psychological abuse and serious neglect and promote cultural changes so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in everyday thinking and practice. The seven standards are compulsory minimum standards for all Victorian schools commencing on January 1 2016.

AIMS

1. To focus the school's care and decision making on the safety and wellbeing of all children enrolled at the school.
2. To promote and maintain a child safe organisation, inclusive of all school environments, through implementing the seven child safe standards (see below).
3. To demonstrate a zero tolerance for child abuse which includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious or psychological harm and serious neglect of a child.
4. To demonstrate a strong commitment to cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to provide a safe environment for children with a disability.
5. To actively and respectfully listen to and empower all children in regards to their safety and wellbeing.

DEPARTMENT POLICY

Ministerial Order No. 870 (available at www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafepolicy) sets out specific actions that registered schools need to take to manage the risk of child abuse in schools. All Victorian schools are required to have a child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety that details:

- the principles that will guide the school in developing policies and procedures to create and maintain a child safe school environment; and
- the actions the school proposes to take to:
 - demonstrate its commitment to child safety; monitor the school's adherence to its child safety policy;
 - support, encourage and enable school staff, parents, and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters; and
 - support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.
 - ensure that child safety is considered in the recruitment, selection and management of staff (including contractors and volunteers).

NEW CRIMINAL OFFENCES:

To improve responses to child sexual abuse three new criminal offences have been introduced.

These include:

'Failure to disclose' offence

A new offence came into effect on 27 October 2014 for adults who fail to disclose child sexual abuse to police. The new offence applies to all adults, not just professionals who work with children.

Any adult who holds a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child in Victoria must report that belief to police, unless they have a reasonable excuse for not reporting.

'Failure to protect' offence

A new 'failure to protect' offence came into effect on 1 July 2015 that applies to people within organisations who knew of a risk of child sexual abuse by someone in the organisation and had the authority to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.

Grooming offence

A grooming offence is now in effect to target individuals who communicate with a child or their parents with the intent of committing child sexual abuse.

IMPLEMENTATION OF CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

STANDARD 1

Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements

- The Principal will, with School Council approval, nominate a **Child Safety Officer** whose duties will include:
 - raising awareness of Overport Primary School's child safety strategies
 - monitoring and reassessing the effectiveness of the child safety strategies, together with the Wellbeing Passion Team
 - communicating the school's child safety strategies to the school community through staff meetings, newsletters, induction etc.
 - leading the delivery of programs for children about the school's child safety strategies and their right to be safe and protected
 - developing policies, procedures and supporting documentation including communication and resources
- The Principal will inform all members of the school community of the school's Child Safety policy through the school newsletter.
- The Principal will oversee the staff and volunteer recruitment practices and processes
- The school's commitment to child safety will be reflected in the vision statement and Strategic Plan.
- Child safety matters will be included on leadership, staff and Wellbeing Passion Team meeting agendas.
- The Child Safe policy will be ratified by school council annually.
- The Annual Report will report on child safety at Overport Primary School.

STANDARD 2

A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety

Overport Primary School's Child Safe Policy is an overarching document that provides an overview of key elements of the school's approach and commitment to child safety. The Child Safe Policy includes a statement of commitment to child safety that is displayed in the school (See appendix A).

STANDARD 3

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

- All of Overport Primary School's staff, volunteers and visitors must agree to abide by the Child Safe Code of conduct and comply with the all related policies
- The Child Safe Code of Conduct clearly sets out the acceptable and unacceptable adult/child relationships and behaviours.
- The Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct sets out the professional standards for school staff and the associated guiding principles such as:

- teachers provide opportunities for all students to learn
- teachers treat their students with courtesy and dignity
- teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with students
- teachers are always in a professional relationship with the students in their school, whether at school or not

STANDARD 4

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

In **recruiting new staff and volunteers** school leaders will:

- Ensure that position descriptions for all new positions advertised from 1 August 2016 include the standard 'Child Safe Environments' clause as provided in the 'Recruitment in Schools' Guide
- Develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate Overport Primary School's commitment to child safety and an awareness of ethical and legislative obligations
- Request two forms of personal identification and evidence of a current Working with Children Check for all people engaged in child-related work
- Carry out thorough reference, WWWC and VIT check during the recruitment process of staff and volunteers
- Conduct interviews that give insight into an applicant's values, attitudes and understanding of professional boundaries.

In **training and supervising staff and volunteers** school leaders will:

- Train staff (including contractors, volunteers and School Council) in the school's child safety strategies
- Supervise new staff and volunteers to ensure they understand the school's commitment to child safety and the role they play in protecting children from abuse such as reporting through appropriate channels any inappropriate behaviour.
- Monitor and reassess the effectiveness of the child safety strategies, together with the Wellbeing Team.

In **supporting and managing existing staff members**, school leaders will:

- Ensure that the mandatory reporting e-module is completed yearly
- Revise the school's child safety strategies including identifying, assessing and minimising risks of child abuse.
- Monitor and reassess the effectiveness of the child safety strategies, together with the Wellbeing Team.
- Review of child safety code of conduct by all members of staff at the beginning of each year.

STANDARD 5

Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

- The Child Safety Officer will familiarise all staff and parents with the PROTECT Policy outlining how school personnel identifies and responds to all forms of abuse in Victorian Schools.
- The Child Safety Officer will familiarise all staff and parents with the Overport Primary School Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures.
- The Child Safety Officer will ensure that all staff are up to date with the Department's Mandatory Reporting online Professional Development module
- The Principal will inform all new staff, whether mandated or not, that they need to report to School Leadership when a belief is formed in the course of undertaking their professional duties that a child is in need of protection from physical injury, sexual abuse or other forms of abuse.
- School leaders will record and respond to all allegations of abuse and safety concerns following the PROTECT Policy.

- Fair procedures for individuals involved in any incidents will be implemented and privacy will be safeguarded.
- If a child is at immediate risk of abuse school leaders will follow our policy and phone 000.

STANDARD 6

Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

- The Child Safety Officer will oversee the annual completion of a Risk Assessment Checklist annually.
- The Risk Assessment Checklist will be reviewed in the event of an incident or breach of the Child Safety Standards.
- The Child Safety Officer, Principal or member of the Wellbeing Team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of the risk controls.
- The Principal will ensure all new staff are informed of their obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse.

STANDARD 7

Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

- Teachers will ensure that children feel safe to report abuse and have processes in place to ensure that students are empowered to raise any child safety concerns.
- Teachers will support students to develop appropriate knowledge and skills so that they can identify and communicate when they don't feel safe in physical and online environments.
- A Personal Safety program will be implemented such as the Life Education Van, SSS program (Student Support Services), cyber safety program and/or teacher lessons, and students will also be made aware of internal and external support, for example Kids Helpline.
- Teachers will involve students in decision making, especially about matters that directly affect them.
- Teachers will seek students' views in relation to safety, and respect what they have to say.
- Teachers will educate students about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality), rights and responsibilities, resilience.
- The Child Safety Officer will promote the Child Safe policy in a way that is readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children.

With the support of leadership and the Wellbeing team, all staff will ensure the needs of all students, particularly children who are vulnerable due to family circumstances, disabilities or indigenous, cultural or linguistic backgrounds through Wellbeing meetings, Student Support Group meetings, individual education plans and/or staged responses.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

PROTECT: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect>

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy will be reviewed annually by teachers, parents, students and School Council. It will also be reviewed if any significant incidents occur.

This policy was last updated in May 2019 and is scheduled for review in **2021**

APPENDIX A

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety at Overport Primary School

Overport 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.

Overport Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Overport Primary School 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 Overport 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.

In its planning, decision-making and operations Overport 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
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.