

CHILD SAFE POLICY

OUR COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY:

Findon Primary School is committed to child safety. As a community we want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff, volunteers and visitors. We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. There is zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures. We meet our legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety.

Findon Primary School is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks. We have rigorous human resources and recruitment practices for staff and volunteers. Our school is committed to educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks. As a community, we support and respect all members of the community. We are committed to the safety of all children including vulnerable students and: including the cultural safety of Indigenous children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability. Findon Primary School has policies, procedures and training in place which 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 at Findon Primary School. Children have a voice 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 school, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome.

In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Indigenous 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
- provide support to students considered vulnerable

We will protect the safety of all children that is consistent with the Child Safe Standards:

Standard 1: Governance and Leadership	Strong and clear governance arrangements allows leaders to ensure child safety is a focus within the organisation
Standard 2: Clear Commitment to Child Safety	Demonstrating a commitment to child safety by Documenting how the organisation will meet its duty of care and obligations
Standard 3: Code of Conduct	A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
Standard 4: Human Resource Practices	Development and implementation of human resource practices that reduce the risk of child abuse occurring within the organisation
Standard 5: Responding and Reporting	All staff and volunteers understand their role in keeping children safe, including their reporting responsibilities
Standard 6: Risk management and mitigation	Consider and define risks to reduce the likelihood of harm in the organisation
Standard 7: Empowering Children	Children have the right to be heard and have their concerns and ideas taken seriously

OUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS:

This policy guides our staff, volunteers and visitors 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.

TRAINING AND SUPERVISION:

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our school understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our school culture aims for all community members to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. Staff are trained annually and volunteers are supported to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand Findon Primary 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.

Findon Primary School takes all reasonable steps to ensure that it employs the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. We develop selection criteria which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities.

Alongside the Department of Education and Training (DET) recruitment processes, we will ensure our recruitment processes include:

- Selection criteria in job descriptions
- VIT registration for teachers – which includes a Criminal Record Check
- Criminal Records Check where applicable for other employees
- Working with Children Checks (WWCC) where applicable for other employees, volunteers and visitors
- Face to face interviews, as a preference
- Detailed reference checks from previous employers

Our school understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations. We welcome and accept applications from Indigenous peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability. All people, other than registered teachers, engaged in child related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a current Working with Children Check and provide evidence of this Check.

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, 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 a school take, as required.

PRIVACY:

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents/caregivers 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:

Findon Primary School takes our legal responsibility seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse and protective concerns 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 policeⁱ

- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our school will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse or protective concerns 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
- Annual Mandatory Reporting is completed by relevant staff.

RISK MANAGEMENT:

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. 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, and online environments.

ALLEGATIONS, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS:

Findon Primary School takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. 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 a reasonable belief of abuse is evident or a disclosure is made.

If an adult forms a **reasonable belief** then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused
- 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

EVALUATION:

This policy shall be reviewed every 3 years as part of the ongoing policy and process review. This policy will be communicated with the school community through the school website, access to the policy through the school office, through staff induction, professional learning and briefing, and through annual School Council Presentations.

REFERENCE:

Policy Advisory Library – Child Safe Standards

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/child-safe-standards/policy>