



HIGHVALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

37. Child Safety Policy

Endorsed by School Council: May 2019

Review date: May 2021

Rationale:

Highvale 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.

Highvale Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse. This policy will apply to all members of the Highvale Primary School community and be inclusive of all school related activities, processes and procedures.

Highvale 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 Indigenous children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

Every person involved in Highvale 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.

Aims:

- To ensure that our school complies with all the requirements of the Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 870.
- To provide a safe and caring school environment that meet the needs of all children and addresses their safety and wellbeing as core business for all staff, parents and students.
- To raise awareness within the school community of the importance of child safety.
- To raise awareness of the needs of all children and enhance the need for sensitive and diverse approaches to child safety issues due to Indigenous, cultural or linguistic background or disability.
- To embed a culture of child safety within the school community and protect children from harm.
- To define the roles and responsibilities of the school and staff in protecting the safety and wellbeing of students.
- To increase awareness of the processes for reporting child abuse.
- To define the rights and responsibilities of students.

Implementation:

The Child Safety Policy should be read in conjunction with the *Highvale Primary School Purpose statement* and the following school policies:

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The school's *Mandatory Reporting 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. All details regarding this process are found in this policy.

The school's approach to Child Safety risk management is informed by the *Duty of Care policy and the Risk Management policy*. Highvale Primary School is committed to undertaking proper risk management process.

In its planning, decision-making and operations *Highvale Primary School* will:

- Appoint the Assistant Principal as the primary Child Safety Officer and ensure that the role statement for this position clearly outlines the requirements for undertaking this vital responsibility;
- Ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibility in meeting the requirements this policy and other related policies and encourage any concerns to be raised, discussed and scrutinised, making it more difficult for abuse to occur or remain hidden;
- Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;

Our Children

- Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives through the guided inquiry perspective on learning encompassing the principles of student voice and choice in the classroom, our Concept Curriculum, school wide Positive Behaviour Support framework, restorative tools, Student Leadership and Buddies programs as well as student groups to enhance voice, such as the Student Representative Council and Green Team;
- Ensure children know whom to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues;
- 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;

Our Staff and Volunteers

- Are provided written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children through the school's Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy Appendix 1, 2, and 3;
- Have an up-to-date National Criminal Records Check or Working with Children Check;
- Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
- Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.
- Facilitate opportunities for discussion in a range of forums across the school community including at Staff meetings, Leadership Team meetings, School Council and the Parents and Friends Association.

Training and Supervision

- Provide ongoing professional learning for staff
- Include the Child Safe Standards in the school induction manual and processes;

Recruitment

- Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high-quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
- Ensure all Volunteers meet the school's *Working with Children Check Policy*;

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, **Appendix 1**, 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 that we as an organisation take.

Privacy

- The school will collect, use and disclose information about particular children and their families according to Victorian Privacy Laws;

Legislative Responsibilities

- Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk;

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

Allegations, Concerns and Complaints

- Highvale PS 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 that 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 has taken place (see information about failure to disclose above).

Definitions related to Child Safety as outlined in Ministerial Order 870.

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
 - 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 is considered to be 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 as an intermediary); or
- a minister of religion.

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](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>.

² 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>.

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](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>.

Achievement Measures

- Effective implementation of all policies that relate to Child Safety

Responsibility and Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed annually or more often if necessary due to changes in regulations or circumstances.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – HPS Child Safety Code of Conduct

Appendix 2 – HPS Child Safe Incident Report